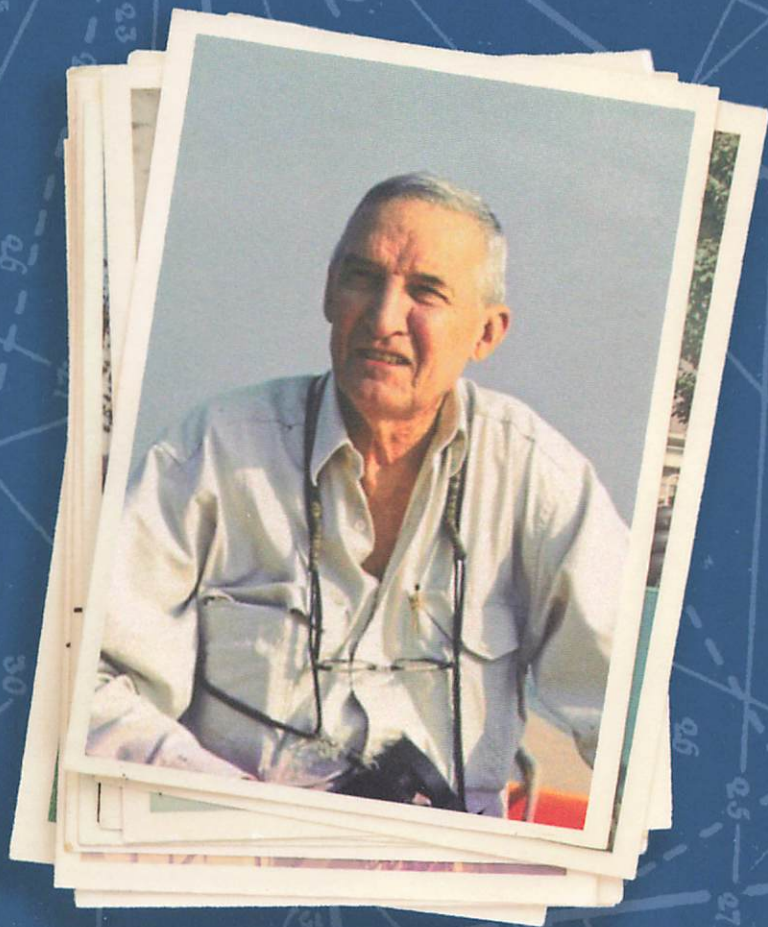


ZERO MERIDIAN, FIVE DEGREES NORTH

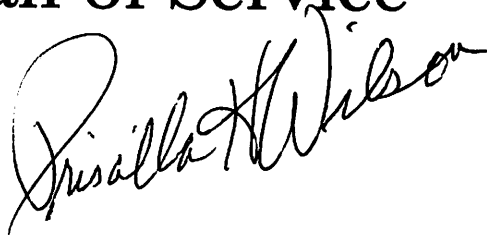
a Man of Service



PRISCILLA H. WILSON

ZERO
MERIDIAN,
FIVE DEGREES
NORTH

a Man of Service

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Priscilla H. Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'W'.

PRISCILLA H. WILSON

Kansas City

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“Rod was a churchman, family man, and dedicated professional who consistently placed service to others at the center of his actions. This book is about the grand adventure of his life as told by his bride and partner in global citizenship for fifty-nine years. The quote from Dag Hammarskjold they often used to ritualize New Years Eve captures the tenor of Rod’s entire life: ‘For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes.’ Beyond words of wisdom, Rod transformed them into reality be it in Kansas, the Philippines, Ghana, or wherever. While I am grateful to have known Rodney, I am very grateful to have read this book.”

— Terry Bergdall, Faculty, Asset Based Community Development Institute, DePaul University, Chicago and past CEO, Institute of Cultural Affairs USA, 2009-2015.

“History happens one life at a time. In *Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North* the life of Rodney Wilson emerges out of the Depression in central Kansas through service in World War II, and then into years of dedicated work for Santa Fe Railroad. But he is also on a faith journey, and in conversation with his wife and friends he is awakened to opportunities for global exploration and service. Here is how a man meets history with humor and energy, is shaped by and shapes the trends of his world and his time. What a pleasure it is to be with him, and to learn from him in the pages of this book.”

— Laura Hanson, MD, Professor of Medicine and Director of Palliative Care Program University of North Carolina

“This book is an act of love that tells a compelling story of love. Rodney Wilson was a profoundly interesting, caring, loving man who traveled to dozens of wondrous places on the planet so he could make life better for others. Together as a team, Rodney and Priscilla Wilson accomplished that exquisitely in more than half a century of marriage, and this is a fitting memorial to a marvelous man by the woman he adored.”

— Bill Tammeus, past president, National Society of Newspaper Columnists

Dedication

To Rodney's three children:
Benjamin Hobart Wilson,
Timothy Guy Wilson
Mary Wilson Van Ryzin
who emulate Rodney in their
love of people,
care of the earth and
practical usefulness.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Foreword | 7 |
| Letter to Rodney, 2003 | 11 |
| Introduction | 13 |
| Life Apprentice — Putting Together the Puzzle Pieces | 15 |
| • Birth and Beginning | 15 |
| • High School Years | 20 |
| • Navy Service | 24 |
| • After the Navy | 36 |
| Social Architect — Dreaming the Possibilities | 43 |
| • Designing our Identity | 43 |
| o Establishing a family | 44 |
| o Creating our Home | 57 |
| o Employed by the Santa Fe Railway | 61 |
| o Participating in the Church | 68 |
| • Shifting Roles | 73 |
| • Birth of the North Shore Cadre | 78 |
| • A Trip Around the World – A Global Odyssey | 82 |
| Social Guardian — Guarding Values | 97 |
| • A Radical Shift ••• Rethinking the future | 97 |
| • Northeast Asia LENS Trek | 99 |
| • Oombulgurri—Australia | 105 |
| • Sudtunggan—Philippines | 114 |
| • A Three Dollar Tux for New Years Eve | 120 |
| Life Exemplar — Currents of Change | 124 |
| • An Unanticipated Move | 124 |
| • Walking in History | 126 |
| • A New Avenue of Service | 130 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| • An Unexpected Pivot | 134 |
| • Another Unforeseen Road | 142 |
| • Celebrating Women | 148 |
| • Setting Sail on Twenty-five Years of Retirement | 150 |
| • Portugal Village Project | 153 |
| • A Crisp Retirement Christmas | 164 |
| • Dominican Republic | 167 |
| • Place of Safety, Jamaica | 170 |
| • Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North | 178 |
| • An Improbable Hike | 185 |
| • Blue Invasion | 190 |
| Spiritual Eldering — A New Beginning in Being Old | 200 |
| • Celebrating our 50th Anniversary | 200 |
| • A Magical Christmas | 213 |
| • Searching for Family | 217 |
| • Vincent | 222 |
| • Closure of the day | 225 |
| Epilogue — Accept Life's Givens | 227 |
| • The Final Journey | 227 |
| • Rodney's Death | 232 |
| • Words About Death | 237 |
| • My Reflection: Through the Years | 239 |
| • 2011 Christmas Preparation | 242 |
| • Grief | 245 |
| Addendum | 246 |
| • Rodney Wilson's Family | 246 |
| • Closing Speech at Institute of Business Economics | 250 |
| • Remembering Rodney | 254 |
| • Going a Round with Rodney | 255 |
| • An Extraordinary Rotarian | 259 |
| • International Travel, List of Countries | 260 |

FOREWARD

I first met Priscilla Wilson after I had been working in Asia for three years. Back in the United States yet homesick, I was attending a workshop in a church basement and noticed a beautiful sari decorating a table. I raised my voice over the crowd and asked, ‘Whose sari is this?’ Priscilla Wilson claimed that sari all those thirty years ago, and she and Rodney Wilson also claimed my heart and my respect. That sari was just the tip of an unfolding adventure of wisdom that I would learn from Priscilla and Rodney Wilson and their commitment to global leading and learning and service.

Priscilla is a gifted writer, group facilitator, global change agent, weaver of stories and more. I have watched her facilitate conflictual groups and thoughtful groups. She gives the same careful and tenacious attention to writing that she gives to facilitating tough organizations and groups through change.

Through her writing she provides us with a mirror to life experiences; a mirror that engages us with universal applications. We are transformed by the generosity of her insight. *Zero Meridian Five Degrees North* is her fourth book; a true treasure chronicling the life of Rodney Wilson.

If I did not know Rodney Wilson, I would swear that this must be the story of several people or at least several lifetimes.

This life and book are full of global perspectives on leadership, service and persistence. Rodney Wilson answered the calling on his hero's journey with great love and humor. He gave us eight decades of funny stories and profound experiences of human understanding and mutual transformation. As Priscilla's partner in love and service, alone and together they gave their gifts of collegiality generously in over fifty countries from Australia to Zimbabwe. They responded affirmatively when asked to fly across the world to serve. They took on complicated development projects in small remote villages with few resources. They exchanged skills and made deep friendships on many continents.

You will discover here the stories that helped form the great character (and I do mean *character*) of Rodney Wilson; how a simple guy from rural Kansas formed a global philosophy of servant leadership and community service and acted upon it with gusto until the day he died. And how with no small amount of bravado, a clipboard and a love of people, he got things done in difficult circumstances.

Priscilla says in the book that women around the world admired Rodney Wilson because of his feminism and empowerment. I loved him, as did so many. I came to know Rodney as a leader, storyteller, role model, father, friend, veteran, and husband. He served as a wise elder. I could observe him as an example of how to be in the world; how to balance the personal and the political, the local and global, vision and practical service, and still be one of the friendliest guys on the planet.

You will read here how Rodney lived life totally, with love and loyalty in each pocket. He was a team player working for the Navy, the Santa Fe Railroad, Rotary, his church, his family, and the Institute of Cultural Affairs. His work philosophy was to make each person on the team a hero rather than himself.

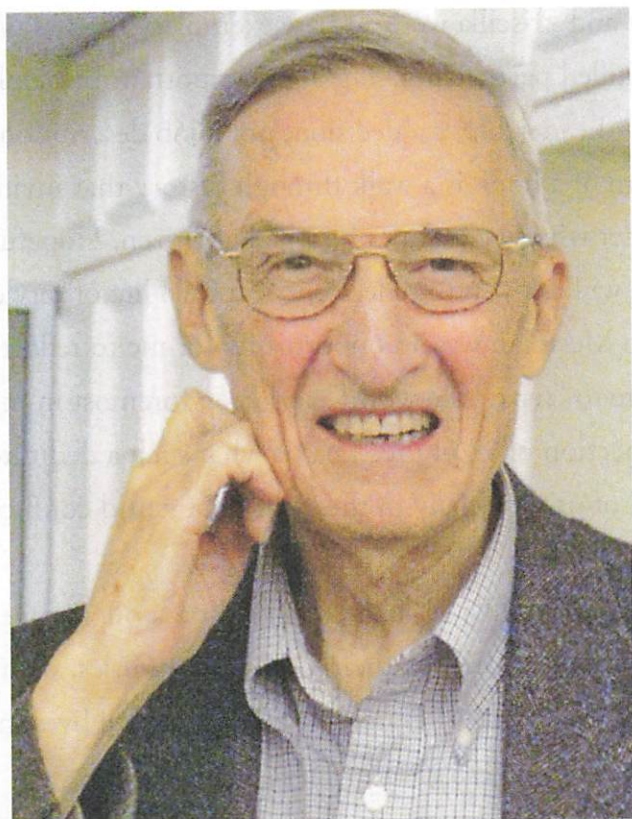
Rodney and Priscilla were and are exemplary models of selfless service and skilled partnership. The most important principle they taught me is “ Leadership is a decision, not a job description.”

This gem of a book is a walk through history that invites you to consider what it means to be a global citizen. Hopefully this life story will ask you to reflect on your own life of service. Reading *Zero Meridian* was an opportunity for me to reflect on my own desire to “repair the world” and keep foremost in mind the interconnection of all of life. That is what such a dedicated life can do for all of us, especially in these times of world conflict and confusion.

Rodney and Priscilla Wilson embarked on a pilgrimage of the heart around the world, in their local communities, with their family and each other. I feel grateful that in these full lives they have taken the time to tell these stories of leadership for us.

May we all be so generous in living and sharing and writing our stories.

Margaretha Finefrock



Richard P. Fisher

April 20, 2003

Dearest Rodney,

As I think about Easter (today) and new life, I'm forever grateful that Cutch pushed you out of the car fifty-six springs ago. It is not possible that there is a life more filled with love and care than the one I've had with you.

Your humor, your care of people, your tool boxes full of good deeds have been – and continue to be – a great joy.

When I think of the experiences we've had together, I'm overwhelmed. The decision to buy that house on Circle that demanded so much of our time, energy and resources – wow! How did we manage all that? Even me being terrified when you went up the ladder to paint those high peaks.

I'm grateful for the years with Norwood Park Presbyterian Church – such learning experiences (Mariners) they were for us both.

How were we ever brave enough to have children? The boys came naturally. But then the process of adopting Mary. Little did we know what joy she would bring – even though I think our parents (my Mother in particular) thought we were slightly nuts.

Then the Ecumenical Institute entered our lives. Thank you for saying “yes” to buying that movie projector. From the struggle of deciding to go on the Global Odyssey to the pain of so many days

and weekends with the “Ecy” types we weathered many a storm. Thank you for never deciding you’d had enough of those struggles.

I’m so grateful for the marriage we created over the years. Your love of villagers gave a depth to our relationship that has been priceless.

I don’t think I ever showed appreciation enough, but I’ve been so proud of all the Rotary awards that have come your way.

I was proud of your decision to go to Scotland when Rex was dying. One more sign of the loyalty and love that is you.

Your patience and support – first with the business that Joel and I created – but more especially with the book writing during the last two years has been very life giving.

I know there are times that I get busy and don’t seem to have enough time for you. I don’t ever really mean to shut you out – and if I have – or seemed to have – I’m sorry.

I’d like one change in our weekly schedule. I’ve always loved dates with you – but we go weeks and “forget” to have a date. Let’s work one night a week into our calendar to be “date night.” It will probably move around to different nights of the week, but when we put up the calendar in the kitchen each week we can just decide.

Thank you for being you – and for marrying me – and sticking it out.

All my love,
Priscilla

INTRODUCTION

Rodney often spoke of writing a book about his life. He left many notes, interviews, speeches, articles and the title he intended to use: *Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North*. He often talked about having lived five lifetimes.

His journey began several years before the Great Depression of the 1930s and ended with his work in global villages. Never casual about his faith, his desire to be practically useful took many shapes during his eighty-five years.

As his wife of fifty-nine years and now his widow, I decided to pull together this material and write his biography.

Memory is a funny thing. As we examine the events in our lives, a new level of meaning flows forth. Memory connects us to what has gone before, to that which really matters.

Only in looking back over our decades can we understand the hinge points that dramatically shaped our life.

The surprises that shaped Rodney's life – and therefore mine included:

A postcard invitation to join the youth choir.

A war in Korea that blocked job opportunities and sent him to the Santa Fe Railway in Chicago “temporarily.”

The word Ecumenical on a neighborhood center that our church sponsored.

A group of women who decided their husbands should meet.

A Rotary sign nailed to a tree in Chikale village in India.

Rodney's life didn't follow most norms. He lived with mystery, wonder, and obedience and overflowed with love for the people he met, worked with, and lived with. This story defines an amazing man who walked in affinity with everyone he encountered.

As our marriage evolved through the years we:

- realized our responsibility for this one planet
- related to a vast array of colleagues and avenues for acting out our care
- recognized profound depths in our marriage.

What makes a time, an event or space sacred? It has to do with our decision to call it such as we recognize change or memories in the moment.

We all have moments when a thought, an idea, a possibility presents itself. We can go one-way or another. We look back and say, "Wow, what if I had chosen a different path?"

I am indebted to every person or group who knew and interacted with Rodney throughout his life.

LIFE APPRENTICE

Putting Together the Puzzle Pieces

Birth and Beginning 1926

In the bigger cities, the Roaring Twenties are in full swing. Flappers dance the Charleston while menfolk invent ways to circumvent prohibition. A mood of prosperity climbs sharply, as the war to end all wars becomes a thing of the past. But in Arkansas City, Fred and Helyn Wilson are struggling with their young family.

It is 1926 and the Wilson's first baby boy, Rodney arrives in Grandma Baldwin's downstairs bedroom. Fred and Helyn, his parents share Grandma Baldwin's big frame house on Chestnut Street in Arkansas City, Kansas, until they can find an affordable small house.

Dr. Frederick Maier baptizes baby Rodney at the First Presbyterian Church. Throughout his life Rodney declares, "I am a card-carrying Presbyterian. That baptism moment resounded as my first call to service."

In 1928 Rodney's brother, Vincent joins the family. Rodney's dad's job as a brakeman in the Arkansas City Santa Fe Rail yards keeps them secure. Grandpa Baldwin works as a carpenter around town.

Before Rodney's third birthday, the October 29, 1929 stock market crash triggers The Great Depression world-wide. Jobs disappear as U.S. unemployment rises to 25%. Fred's name appears only periodically on the "extra" board.

In 1931, Fred gathers the family together. "I am only getting one or two calls to work each week. We can't eat on that. The Santa Fe has offered me steady work in the yards in Guthrie, Oklahoma."



*Rodney
Eugene Wilson*

The family packs up. Tearfully they leave Grandpa and Grandma, and drive eighty-five miles south.

Freddie joins the family in 1935. Between the Depression and the increasing dust storms, supporting a family becomes harder, but at least their Dad has a job

Everything turns brown during those years. Wind filled with dust never lets up. Some days people can scarcely breath. Dust covers the tables, chairs, toys and clothes. Rodney's mom says, "You three boys stay in the bedroom away from the windows. These wet washrags over your noses and mouths may help you breathe."

Many families pack up their old dilapidated cars and leave Oklahoma. The dusty roads shine with a mirage of California jobs.

Families feel the pinch of the depression, but Rodney remembers a fun childhood in Guthrie. Sam and CJ, his two favorite buddies join him for games and hiking. Their hours together bathe those years in colorful memories.

Rodney yearns for a bicycle. He drops hints for a bicycle. Christmas Day, 1936, he wakes up early. As he approaches the Christmas tree, he pauses thinking, "That box isn't big enough for a bike." He stuffs his disappointment down inside before he moves to the tree. He gulps as he tears off the wrapping paper. An orange Popeye sweatshirt emerges. He can barely murmur, "Thank you."

But the next Christmas, his spirits soar as he spies the bright red Western Flyer with fenders. He rushes to the Christmas tree. The one speed bike changes speeds only by peddling slower or faster. He can inflate the white sidewall balloon tires with a hand pump. Rodney learns that his Dad paid \$30.00 to the Western Auto store for his bike, "Thanks, Dad. That was a lot of money to spend on me."

Rodney practically lives on that bicycle. He constantly rounds up Vincent, and his buddies, CJ and Sam to ride three miles north

to the Cimarron River. They relish playing on the river's sandy banks and swimming...remembering to stay clear of the quick sand. When they learn the river's name "Cimarron" means "outcast" in Spanish their adventures take on an investigative twist. No one minds sunburn, and the cottonwood trees lining the banks offer exploring possibilities.

In 1939 Rodney practices for the school's yo-yo competition. He nearly collapses from disappointment as he hears, "Rodney

Wilson, second- place winner."



Striving to improve, he practices with the yo-yo all the next year and reenters the contest. He swells with pride as he receives the first place prize sweater vest with, "1940 DUNCAN YO-YO WINNER"¹ printed across the front.

Listening to the radio program, Little Orphan Annie makes Ovaltine Rodney's favorite chocolate drink. When the program's contest urges children to win a decoder ring by drinking Ovaltine, Rodney's mother can't keep enough in the cupboard. Rodney dutifully sends in the bottle tops. One day he receives the exhilarating message, "Rodney Wilson has won the decoder ring. It will arrive in the mail soon." Finally the package arrives. His excitement bubbles over as he tears the paper off the package. Finally, the ring and the instructions for decoding the secret message are his. But the "secret" message is

1 The Yo-Yo sweater is framed and now hangs in Grandson Warren's bedroom.

really no secret. Rodney decodes the message, “Be sure to brush your teeth regularly.”

Rodney is filled with imagination and ideas and suggests, “Let’s string a garden hose from the barn window to our shed. I bet we can talk in one end and hear all the way to the other.” It works; they receive information about their games from one end of the yard to the other, even if they are shouting to be heard.

A paper route with the Guthrie Register News keeps a bit of spending money in Rodney’s pockets. That money means he can go to the movie down town on Sunday afternoons. His first and only venture into crime occurs at the newspaper office. One day as the boys fold the newspapers Rodney slips a pencil into his pocket. The other four boys follow his example. Their manager, Bill Burk, glances up in time to see this. He calls them over and demands they apologize to their boss.² Rodney hangs his head as he mumbles his confession to Mr. Dolph.

On December 7, 1941 fifteen-year-old Rodney attends a movie with his buddies. In the middle of the film, Bill, the newspaper circulation manager calls the boys out of the movie, “We need you boys to deliver a special newspaper across town,” Bill says, “The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor. Be sure to holler, ‘Extra, extra. Japanese attack Hawaii’ so folks will know this is special.” Rodney

2 Letter I received after Rodney’s death. “The stealing a pencil episode was probably a Mikado 2 for a nickel then, but money wasn’t the problem. I made him go to Mr. Dolph and confess. He dreaded it. Mr. Dolph had the story and followed through when Rodney came in that week and had to see him. It was a rare association for “the old man – 17 years old me – the carrier boys 10-14, and I became their father confessor. Bill Burk.”

quickly loads his bicycle with the papers. This request sounds important to him. His town is depending on them to spread this news. Quick to look for what needs to be done, he goes for it.

In late December 1941, Fred again calls the family together. “The Santa Fe wants me to come back to Arkansas City to be a brakeman in the yard there. They also want your Mom to work in the Santa Fe Superintendent’s office and be his secretary.”

Rodney rides to CJ’s house and finds Sam there also. He shares his dad’s plans, “I don’t want to go. I don’t want to leave you guys. Going to a new high school as a sophomore sounds scary.”

Years later he realizes that he had experienced “community” for the first time in Guthrie. Those play times with the other boys began his understanding of being a team.

High School Years 1942-1944

The family returns to Arkansas City to Grandma and Grandpa Baldwin’s two-story white wooden house. The wide front porch with its two-seater swing feels like returning home. Grandpa fixes up a separate apartment upstairs for himself and Grandma with three bedrooms, a bath and a kitchen. Rodney’s family has plenty of room on the first floor.

Grandpa gets work building Strother Field, the air force base north of town. Unfortunately a massive stroke hits him not long after starting that job. Rodney hears the news of Grandpa’s death,

and experiences a kick in his stomach. He spends days replaying the fun of learning how to plane a board, plumb a line, set the screws. He had looked forward to spending more time learning skills from his beloved Grandpa.³

In the spring of 1942 Rodney talks with Mrs. Duvall about an after school job. She hires him for \$6.95 for a sixty-hour week of work after school at her Drug Store on Summit Street. One of his tasks includes sweeping the floor with a long-handled push broom.

One warm afternoon the store's customers relish the cool air drifting down from a large ceiling fan. The front door stands open. As Rodney lifts his broom to start cleaning the floor, the long handle catches in the blades of the fan. He gasps as he hears a loud crack. One fan blade breaks off. Hardly daring to look, he holds his breath as the blade spins past the glass display cases. It swivels through the store toward the sidewalk and proceeds out the open door.

Rodney watches in dismay as the blade crosses the sidewalk and wobbles into the street. As it shakes to a stop he slumps to the floor. The blade has halted without hitting anyone or anything. Relief floods him as he realizes all the merchandise, people or automobiles it could have hit and he vows to forever pay more attention to details.

In 1943, Rodney's mom comes home from work and says, "I heard that the Santa Fe needs labor to construct crossing gates for

³ Thirteen years later, he suggests that we name our first son, Benjamin in honor of Grandpa.

the railroad at the Navy bases in Norman, Oklahoma. Since most of the working age men have gone to war, the Santa Fe is taking advantage of some recent revisions in the child labor laws. They can hire sixteen year olds with a parent's release."

Rodney fills out an application for a summer job. He needs to send a recommendation with his application so he writes their former next-door neighbor in Guthrie. The Guthrie Police Chief sends him this note,

Guthrie Okla.
8-8-1943.

Dear Sir -

I have known Rodney - to be a good clean, reliable, honest boy. Parents are fine people - and I feel he will make good at his job. Will recommend him anytime. He was always good worker at what he done here - never was in any trouble and as Officer was in position to know some

Truf yours -

Fred L. Stuetgen
Chief -

That June, 17 year-old Rodney arrives in Norman by train. Converted old mail cars provide living facilities for the work crews. Stifling heat permeates their nights; the bunk cars have no air conditioning or cooling. By mid-week, the cramped conditions, sweaty bodies and dirt make the cars grim and smelly. Each evening

Rodney and the crew walk up the hill to the dusty little town to eat.

The schedule is grueling; Rodney works five days a week, nine hours each day, with three more hours on Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon he catches the passenger train and rides 150 miles home to get clean clothes. He rides back, the next night to go to work Monday morning. His head slumps and his eyes clamp shut most of the 150 miles both ways.

The work crews dig ditches and lay power cables in the railroad crossing gates both at the north and south Navy bases. They mix cement by hand and dig ditches to exact specifications – so many inches wide, so many inches long, and straight up and down. In order to get the ditches perfect, the foreman walks along checking with a foldout tape measure. For two summers Rodney's career with the Santa Fe consists of ditch digging. He later recalls, "We had to be precise and perfect and I had drilled into me how important it was to do a job right."

By Rodney's junior year in high school the war effort saturates the news. He marches into the Navy's Recruiting Office, "Hello, I'm here to join the Navy."

The recruiting officer looks him up and down. "You are too young and too little. Come back later when you are older," he says. Rodney's shoulders slump as he trudges back home.

Rodney and his Dad have many conversations on their front porch swing "watching the traffic go by." His Dad assures him, "Another year and you will be old enough to join the Navy."

This father-son ritual becomes a time of sharing the im-

portance of respect and consideration for women and girls. His Dad spins stories that instill in him a life-long value of honor and esteem. Through out his life, women admire and love Rodney because of his gentlemanly respect and care.

In March of his senior year, Rodney and six of his buddies proceed to the Post Office to see the Navy Recruiters again. This time they hear, "Ok, boys. Since you guys are seniors this year, we'll take you. Sign now and we'll let you become one of us in May after you graduate."

High School graduation ends by 8:45 p.m. on May 27, 1944. At 9:15 p.m. Rodney boards the train south. He gives his mother and grandmother big hugs and tries not to notice them both crying. "Don't worry," he says, "I'll be fine and will write."

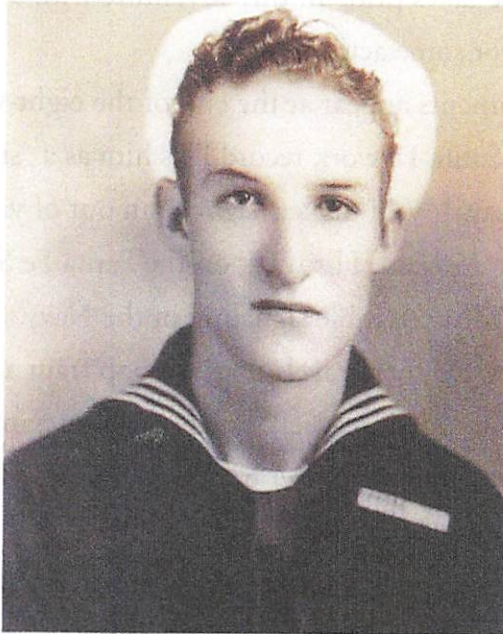
He crosses the country with C.J. and Sam, his Guthrie buddies who board the train in Oklahoma City. They feel so big and important now, going to war at last. They chatter, laugh and remember escapades from their early days all the way. The steam engine spews soot through the open windows as they cross the country to Navy Boot Camp in San Diego.

Navy Service 1944

"Get in line. Straighten up there," echoes through the San Diego camp as they march. Boot Camp makes sailors out of raw recruits.

Rodney liked to run the obstacle courses. He was just sev-

enteen and the younger ones could always outrun the older guys because they weren't in very good shape. He loved to outrun them and tease them. They said the whole Navy was going to pot because it had nothing but young kids anymore.



Rodney Wilson, Seaman, U.S. Navy

In addition to marching five miles a day, sailors have to know how to survive if their ship gets hit and they end up in the water. All the sailors had to jump into the water and use their clothes for life preservers. Some of the farm boys can't swim, so sergeants take them up a high tower and push them off into a pool. They learn fast.

One day all training stops. Everyone in the camp listens at attention to General Eisenhower's announcement over the loud speakers. "Today, June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops

have landed along a fifty mile stretch of heavily-fortified French coastline to fight Nazi Germany on the beaches of Normandy, France. We will accept nothing less than full victory.”

Rodney worries, “Are we too late? Are we going to miss most of the action?” He takes pride in this adventure with a fraternity of guys, all itching for some action.

New assignments appear at the end of the eight-week Boot Camp. Rodney’s Santa Fe work record lists him as a “signalman” so the Navy offices say, “We’ll make a signalman out of you.” Rodney laughs about that decision. His work on the Santa Fe Signal Gang digging ditches didn’t resemble signaling in the Navy.

Nevertheless, Rodney travels on the troop train across the United States for the sixteen-week signal school in Sampson, New York. Academic studies have never been easy, but signaling comes easier for him than schoolwork.

Rodney and the other trainees “stand watch on signal bridges” as they practice sending and receiving messages with flashing lights and semaphore flags. They learn how to care for and repair their signal flags, take bearings and recognize visual navigational aids.

The signal trainees practice in pairs. Later when they join a convoy, they understand the importance of working in pairs. One signalman faces the signaling ship and reads the signal. His buddy writes the message as he states it. Years later Rodney still considered signaling a highlight of his life and he often bragged, “I still know the Morse code. I became one of the best.”

The trainees spend hours learning the silhouettes of every

kind and nationality of ship: the battleships, cruisers, and aircraft carriers. They recognize all types and nationalities of airplanes. During training, the Morse code, plus the ship and airplane types flash on a screen as fast as the machine can go, day in and day out. Instant recognition saves lives.

Rodney mentions to another trainee, “When I have trouble learning some of the letters, I rap the signals over and over on my bunk at night until I get it right.”

After completing training, Rodney is assigned as armed guard for defense on a merchant Marine Liberty ship.

On the way back to the west coast for this new duty, Rodney stops in Arkansas City for a three-day leave. He enjoys family, and relishes Grandma’s meals, especially her carrot salad.

He proceeds to San Francisco by troop train for further armed guard training before reporting to the Liberty ship, Samuel K. Barlow.

Liberty ships ferry the majority of goods and personnel as the island invasions proceed across the Pacific. These ships are put together like a jigsaw puzzle, fabricated from stamped out steel pieces and constructed in sections, welded together instead of riveted. This speedier process becomes a lifeline for the British before the United States enters the war. Time Magazine names the Liberty Ships, “Ugly Ducklings.”⁴

Learning how to signal becomes a turning point for Rodney.

4 The Chairman of the Maritime Commission later said, “Without the merchant shipping the Allies would have lost. The Armed Guard who defended these ships against submarines and planes had a mission of supreme importance.”

He's part of the effort to get services and resources to strategic points. His pride in ensuring his flag bag's readiness for accuracy and promptness in signaling instills a new self-confidence in him.⁵

With its cargo of supplies, the Samuel K. Barlow sails out of Pearl Harbor in December 1944 with two signalmen on board. They join hundreds of other ships in the convoy out of Pearl Harbor. Rodney sees ships stretching for miles in all directions.

Dizziness sweeps over him as he looks at the wreckage of the Arizona and other ruins scattered around the harbor and realizes, "This is where it all started."

From Hawaii, the ships zigzag slowly, about ten knots (ten nautical miles) per hour. They first stop in the Northern Pacific at the Marshall Islands, an island nation.

While unloading at Saipan, an island in the Marianas, Rodney joins some of the sailors swimming off the ship. One of the sailors notices a sign that reads, "Be careful. That's where the current is. The garbage is in there, and that draws sharks." The swimming stops.

The Liberty ships have cold salt-water showers. One morning, hoping for a warm shower Rodney sets a bucket of water on the stove. The kitchen crew raises cane yelling, "Get that dirty bucket off the stove. Pancakes have to be fried there for breakfast."

Rodney keeps his flags at the ready, carefully washed, repaired

5 Twenty years later Rodney teaches his son's Boy Scout Troop the signal codes so they can earn a badge. The Signaling merit badge was one of the original 57 merit badges issued by the Boy Scouts of America in 1911.

and folded. In convoy, signalmen leave one flag folded and wrapped with string up on the mast, the yardarm. If a man goes overboard, Rodney knows to jerk that line through the rope and pull it tight. A light flashes signaling, “Man overboard.” Rodney often wonders, “If someone goes overboard in a convoy, can we afford to stop?” The thought of lurking submarines remains a real threat.

“Twice my whole body shook with fear. One day, standing on the stern of the ship I fearfully watched something coming through the water. I bit my tongue as I prayed that it would avoid us. Then I swallowed hard as it passed by the ship several yards away. We never knew if it was a torpedo or just a phosphorous wake from something else. I gasped with relief when I didn’t hear an explosion.”

“The other time fear gripped me, Kamikaze planes filled the sky. I knew they were after the big guys, aircraft carriers and such. But they were commissioned to hit something and it might be us. I thought about how upset my grandmother would be. I didn’t admit my fear for a long time.”

“We saw three planes coming toward us right at dusk and General Quarters went off. We all ran to our battle stations. One of the planes went down and exploded into flames. Later we heard that one plane had crashed into a mess hall. Another hit a carrier.”

“A lot of scurrying around took place; one sailor in the kitchen hid under a table to protect himself. He probably regretted that later as he listened to a lot of ridiculing. I didn’t think he ought to take any teasing. If he was scared, he was scared.”

On Ulithi in the Carolinas, hundreds of ships gather for

several days. Battleships, carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and supply ships fill one of the largest staging areas in the Pacific. Rodney receives promotion to signalman third class while anchored in the Ulithi harbor.

One morning, Rodney searches the harbor in amazement as he realizes no other ships are left. They all slipped out for battle during the night. Later, Rodney wondered if they were headed toward Iwo Jima. Ulithi, for a time the world's largest naval facility, remains a secret throughout the war.

The sailors listen to Tokyo Rose broadcast on the radio while anchored at Guam. Tokyo Rose croons, "Oh, boys, don't you miss your girlfriends? I bet your wives are stepping out on you." They later discover that the Japanese had six or eight women playing the voice of Tokyo Rose. When Rodney hears the women mention Guam he realizes they know his location. He trembles and urges himself to try to relax. But his tension only releases slowly.

A typhoon hits the convoy on their way to Iwo Jima in March 1945. "I didn't know enough to be scared during that typhoon," he later reflects. Water poured over the gunnels of all the ships in spite of their height. Ships disappeared from each other in the swells and two destroyers turned over 180 degrees.

During the storm they have to grab on to something when they walk around the ship. Some of the sailors hang their hammocks underneath the gun towers so they won't swing back and forth with the ship's moving.

Rodney wraps his arms around a bar by his bunk to keep from

being flung out. He holds on to his plate when eating so it won't skate all the way down the table.

The Samuel K Barlow unloads supplies on Iwo Jima in March toward the end of the island's invasion. Some of the island's fiercest cleanup battles continue in full operation.

During unloading of supplies, Rodney's commander calls him in. "Rodney will you escort Kelly Cochran ashore? He has to have his appendix taken out. Can you take him to a MASH tent (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital)?"

"Yes sir, glad to do that."

Rodney leaves Kelly at the MASH unit saying, "While you get your operation I'm going to walk around. I'll be back to take you back to the ship this afternoon." He walks up to a group of Marines on patrol, "Hi, I'm waiting around while my shipmate has an operation. Do you guys mind if I walk with you?"

"No, come along. We're looking for any leftover Japs. There are still too many hiding out in the caves. We lost many of our guys on that beach behind us where we all landed. Even before the end of the worst fighting, several guys went to the top of Mount Suribachi and posted that flag you can see."

As they walk Rodney asked, "What is that awful smell?"

One of the guys explains, "The smell of death, plus a yellow sulfuric mist rises out of the cracks in the earth all the time. It makes the island smell like rotten eggs. Remember that smell from your high school chemistry class?"

Rodney keeps his distance as some of the Marines shoot flame-

throwers into caves. He sees carnage everywhere and a few Marines who were shot by the Japanese defenders. A sense of disquiet sweeps over him. It seems hard to imagine how excruciating the invasion dangers had been.⁶

Rodney helps Kelly return to the ship that night after a successful operation, glad to get off the island.

After unloading everything on Iwo Jima, their ship develops mechanical problems, so they return to the USA for repairs.

During a stop in Peleliu in April of 1945, all the loudspeakers blare startling news, "President Roosevelt died today of a cerebral hemorrhage. All we know so far is that he died at Warm Springs, Georgia." Rodney shudders, "What on earth can this mean about ending the war?" Who is President now? Roosevelt has kept this whole thing together."

When their ship reaches Pearl Harbor on the way to San Francisco, Rodney carries a clipboard over to the warehouse and talks to the sailor on guard.

Rodney looks down at his paper and asks, "Where's Captain Wilcox? I'm supposed to see the Captain."

"What do you want with Captain Wilcox?"

"He's supposed to give me a case of fresh strawberries."

"Wilcox. I don't know any Wilcox."

"That's what it says here."

6 Seventy years later one of the US generals sets up a reunion of US and Japanese survivors and their families on Iwo Jima. It is the only battlefield of any war where both sides come together to meet as friends not enemies on the battlefield.

“Okay, go ahead. Pick up your strawberries. Get a couple of boxes.”

Rodney is a hero for a day or two.

“If you carry a clipboard around and act like you know what you’re doing, you can get almost anything done,” Rodney recalls later.

The Samuel K Barlow sails up the Columbia River to Portland. Rodney just arrives home by train when the USA drops the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrenders. Rodney wonders, “Now what?”

After a 30-day leave, Rodney reports to a large troop transport ship full of signalmen and radiomen sailing to the Philippines. Their next task involves bringing amphibious equipment home cross the Pacific.

Even though the war has ended, his work continues everyday on the ship. During General Quarters, at sun up and sun down, everybody reports to their battle stations. Rodney mans the bridge with required equipment that includes helmet and life preserver with a single cell flashlight plus a pocketknife attached to the preserver with safety pins.

In the Philippines, Rodney serves as petty officer of the yard, the Navy’s variation of a non-commissioned officer, both as a leader and a technical expert. While waiting for all the other ships to load cargo to sail home, Rodney’s crew runs mail from Subic Bay to Manila, sailing down one day and back the next.

Every night Rodney crawls under his mosquito net and hears,

“bzz bzz bzz.” The nets over his bunk never decrease his worry. He doesn’t know if what he hears are flies inside or outside the covering. To stave off malaria, a bitter yellow pill, atibrine, appears on their lunch trays each day.

A Filipino man at Subic Bay sells Mabel to guys on the ship and they set sail with Mabel the monkey.

“Mabel kept messing around in my flag bag,” Rodney later explained. “She’d pull out flags and mess them up. I’d chase her off and she’d come right back. She had a line tied around her narrow middle that I used to pull her away from my bag. She kept finding a way to get back and mess with the flags.”

“One day I grabbed her and snapped her on the line. Then I pulled and sent her to the top of the yardarm. Frightened half to death, she started pooping all over everything, including me.”

“I tried to pull her down. Overwhelming fear kept her clutching anything she could grab. I finally got her down. After that, anytime I’d go near her and snap those snaps she’d hiss and back off away from me. I scared the hell out of that monkey, but she never bothered my flag bag again.”

“The guys on the ship used to give Mabel beer at night; they’d get her drunk. Poor monkey. Finally, they made a trade of some kind on Guam and got rid of her. I was glad to see her go.”

They arrive at Pearl late one night but the gates are shut. The convoy of ships circles slowly until the gates open in the morning and they have the okay to enter the harbor.

With ships resupplied they sail for San Francisco. This return-

ing convoy brings back all the LCIs (Landing Craft Infantry) that landed troops on island after island across the Pacific.

Back in San Francisco, their next assignment puts them in charge of the homecoming of the seventh fleet. Rodney handles the tower in the middle of San Francisco Bay to guide all the fleet traffic. His team decommissions the ships, and then the men are mustered out.



One night on leave, the shore patrol hands Rodney a ticket charging, “Out of uniform.” Rodney prefers white socks rather than regulation black socks.

The patrolman happens to be a signalman too, so Rodney argues, “You and I are brothers. You’re a signalman, I’m a signalman.” The patrolman doesn’t care. His assignment, “Catch people out of uniform.”

Rodney now serves as the highest-ranking petty officer in his group, a signalman, second-class. He administers all the discharge papers. Mustered out in San Diego, they catch the train to Norman, Oklahoma, to be discharged. A mixture of joy and sadness surges through him. Joy to be going home, but sadness to be leaving the Navy he loves.

When asked years later about his Navy experience he replies, “I joined out of a sense of adventure, but I loved the fraternity of guys. I experienced real collegiality as we worked together. That meant a lot to me. I was so proud of the skill of signaling. At last I was good at something; I had not been very good in school. I knew that skill was important and others depended on me in the delivery of needed resources across the Pacific.”

Grandson, Jeffrey interviewed Rodney in 2006 about his Navy experiences. The Veterans History Project in 2008 also interviewed him.

After the Navy

Soon after he returns home, Rodney goes to the Santa Fe yards to ask about a job. They hire him to return to the signaling department digging ditches and laying cables for the cantilever signals in the Oklahoma heat as he had done in high school.

One day, a work train comes out to set the cantilever. Envy fills Rodney as he observes the cool looking fireman sitting in the engine out of the sun in a short-sleeve shirt. The fireman watches the crew prepare to set the cantilever. The ditch diggers on the ground wear long sleeve shirts as protection from the sun and sweat long, hot, dirty hours.

When Rodney returns to town the next weekend, he says, “Mom, I’d like to be a fireman and fire steam engines. What do I need to do?”

“Set up an appointment with the master mechanic.”

Rodney talks with Mr. Buchanan, the master mechanic who replies, “I used to pull your granddad Wilson, he came up through the ranks and was a locomotive engineer. I’ll tell you what, you come back next May and put your application in; we’ll see what happens.”

The next spring, Rodney makes five unpaid student round trips to train to be a fireman. In that steam-locomotive era on railroads (1830-1955), the fireman was not only the one who stoked the boiler and fed it water to make steam. He was also the co-pilot of the locomotive. The fireman - all at the same time - managed the combustion and steam production of a 1000- to 6000-hp power plant and helped the engineer running at high speed in identifying signals, watching at road crossings for hazards or obstructions on the right-of-way.

Rodney serves as a fireman for four years. He often bragged, “I fired steam locomotive #2903 which was the largest locomotive engine in Illinois, built in 1943.”⁷

In the spring of 1947, a strange postcard invites him to join the youth choir at the First Presbyterian Church. Puzzled, he wonders who on earth thinks he can sing. He has been told in school that he can’t sing a note. He carries the card around with him, and one day, asks his friend Joy-B, “Look at this postcard. It is signed by Priscilla Hutchinson. Who is she?”

⁷ In March 1995, Illinois Railway Museum orchestrated the movement of Santa Fe 2903 from display outside Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry to the Illinois Central Railroad so that the engine could join IRM's collection at Union Illinois west of Chicago.

She points to me where I'm working in the snack shop at the public swimming pool. Later he claims that he fell in love at first sight.

In the fall a rumor floats through the high school that Rodney Wilson plans to ask me for a date. Most of my friends are dating the "big boys"—returned veterans. I am a junior in high school; I have decided, "I'm not going to date one of the 'big boys.'"

Walking home from school one day, I see Rodney and his friends parked down the block. His friend Cutch pushes him out of the car and slowly he approaches me. "I am so intrigued, but oh dear, what now?" I think.

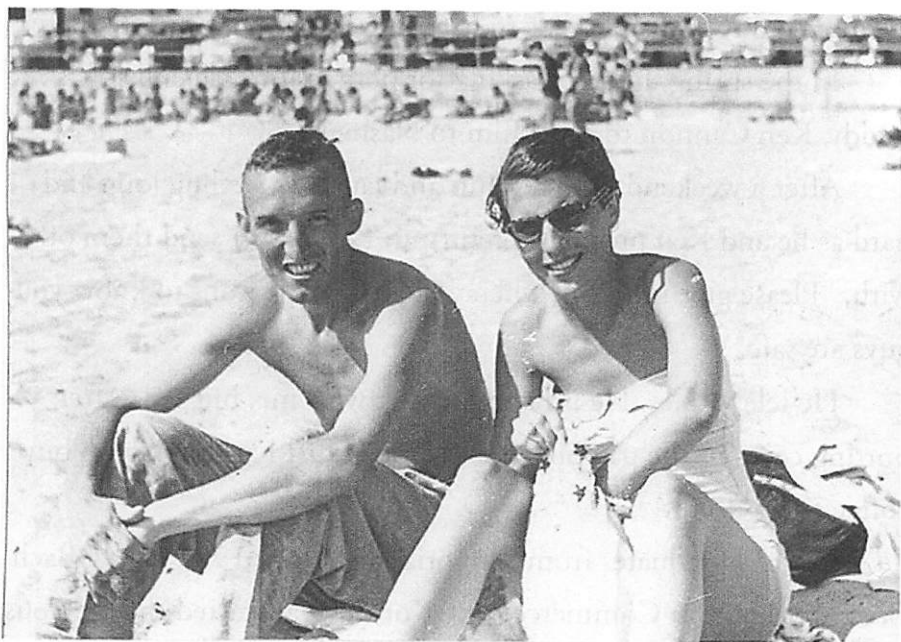
Shyly he asks, "Hi, can you go out with me for a hamburger after your operetta rehearsal Wednesday night?"

What a relief! I don't even have to think. "I'm sorry, I can't. My parents won't let me go out on a school night."

However, soon he asks me again and we begin dating and I discover that I like him a lot. He is attentive, polite to my parents and good looking. But best of all his wonderful sense of humor captures me.

The first time Rodney kisses me remains a forever memory. Who knows where we had been on this second date. We talk for a while parked in front of my house at 119 North B Street. We both feign nervous fascination with the raindrops running down the windshield. At some expedient moment he leans over and gives me a kiss. Many years later we remember that special moment as a first step in shaping our romance.

He often shared one of his grandmother's sayings, "A bushel of love is the most love in the world." About the time he declares, "I love you bushels," I fall – hook, line and sinker.



His first two years out of the Navy Rodney attends Arkansas City Junior College (now Cowley County Community College). He graduates from the Junior College in 1949, the same year I graduate from high school. The first two years we are in the same town dating, but the next three years are filled with letters written nearly every day and holiday visits.

The fall after Junior College, he goes to Emporia State Teachers College (renamed Emporia State University in 1977). I go to Nashville's Ward Belmont School for Girls that same year.

Soon after school starts Rodney stops by to see my parents and says, "I am thinking of going to Nashville one weekend to see Priscilla. Do you have any objections?"

My father quickly replies, "That is not a good idea. This is her first time away and she needs to be doing things with people there."

In the spring, he skips asking for permission. He enlists his buddy, Ken Cannon to drive him to Nashville.

After a weekend of hikes, fun and laughter we hug long and hard as he and Ken prepare to return to Emporia. I send them off with, "Please give me a call when you get back. I want to know you guys are safe."

He telephones. He is happy to talk with me, but sad. After putting coins in the pay phone to call he didn't have money to buy coffee and a donut.

Rodney graduates from Emporia in January 1951 with a Bachelors of Science in Commerce. The Korean War started the previous spring so Rodney's Navy Reserve standing hinders his chances of finding a job. Conoco at Ark City, City Service and Phillips 66 at Bartlesville all tell him, "No way, With your reserve standing you might have to leave as soon as we hire you."

Discouraged, he takes a job sorting bolts at Boeing in Wichita. Being a great bolt sorter bores him and he becomes desperate to find something else.

Rodney's mother hears that Mr. Mahoney, General Superintendent of the Santa Fe's Transportation Department in Chicago

needs “kids from railroad families” who aren’t afraid to walk into a switch shanty and talk with all those switchmen in their work clothes. His mom suggests, “You need to talk to someone in Chicago.”

Rodney contacts his friend Bill Burk, now in the Santa Fe’s Public Relations Department in Chicago. Bill says, “That’s right. Mr. Mahoney is looking for railroad kids. You have been around your dad as he has worked as a brakeman in the Ark City yards. That qualifies you as a “railroad kid.”

With no hesitancy Bill goes to bat for him and Rodney travels by train to Chicago for an interview in the transportation department. He sells himself and is called to come back to Chicago. Bill and his wife, Mary meet him at the train and find him a place to live right by the Illinois Central, a perfect commuter arrangement. Bill suggests Rodney enroll in night school to learn shorthand.

Rodney reports to me, “I am not sure I can handle Chicago... the size and confusion. I’ll take a job up here temporarily until something better comes along.”

He serves as Mr. Foltz’s secretary, and embarks on a career of forty years with the railroad.

I am a sophomore at Oklahoma University.

We are both yearning to be together.

We make the decision. One night at home I enter my folk’s bedroom. Sitting on the end of my Daddy’s bed I announce, “I am going to drop out of school so Rodney and I can get married.”

My father sits straight up saying, “Oh no, you are not.”

My parents refuse to hear of my leaving OU before I graduate. I speed up the trek to a degree by attending two summer school sessions and a semester of correspondence.

I graduate a year early and receive my diploma in August 1952. We write letters almost every day so my education suffers, but at least I receive a degree in Elementary Education. My father believes every girl should be able to earn a living “in case something happens to her husband.”

During our dating years, I discover that Rodney has a strange sense of responsibility for everything in his sphere of influence. He shared with me the many conversations with his father during his growing up years. They set the tone of Rodney’s relationships as he treated women with a gentleman’s care that endeared him to almost every woman he ever met.

SOCIAL ARCHITECT

Dreaming the Possibilities

Designing our Identity

During the 1950's and 60's Rodney and I spend our time, energy and resources discovering our sense of identity. "*The first half of life is discovering the script, and the second half is actually writing it and owning it.*"⁸

We are still fashioning survival skills as a young family. We are energized with dreams, hopes, and confidence. We focus on establishing our family, creating our home, and building relationships. Early on we muddle through in terms of how to raise children and how to operate at work. But over time Rodney forges his values as he works at the Santa Fe Railway and later volunteering in a variety of places.

Later in life when the unknown beckons we have the courage to set sail in new directions. Rodney is fifty-four years old when we move to Kansas City. In a fog of uncertainty we search for purpose in a new way. One of the most famous one-liners in the Bible supports us, "Do not be afraid."

⁸ *Falling Upward, A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, Richard Rohr

We attempt to learn from our mistakes as we encounter limits and boundaries. Early on we thought in terms of “either-or” but later our thinking evolves into, “both-and.” We redraw the map of our directions having learned to trust future possibilities. As an awareness of loss and the free-fall of aging occurs we have the ability to decide and re-decide how to respond.

Four major factors shape the identity of our family through the years:

- establishing our family
- creating a home
- engaging in vocation (job)
- connecting with the church

Establishing a Family 1952

Late afternoon sun casts a soft glow through the rose window’s stained glass. The walnut in the sanctuary signals a lovely welcome to all. Bridesmaids and maid of honor, my sister, Pam, in dresses of coral move with the music toward the front of the sanctuary. Rodney and his best man, brother Fred stand with Dr. Swain near the altar. After an eternity the organ strains of *Here Comes the Bride* beckon my move down the aisle on the arm of my father.

We repeat the traditional vows. A slight struggle with sliding the ring on my finger slows the process. Finally we hear the words

we have waited months to hear, “I now pronounce you man and wife.”

All gather for the reception at the Arkansas City Country Club. Later, we realize the candles were never lit. Does that invalidate this marriage? Surely not, since the marriage lasted fifty-nine years.



October 26, 1952

We drive to Gatlinburg in Tennessee's Smoky Mountains where fog and mist often cover the mountains, giving them their name. Enough visibility during our honeymoon encourages our long hikes through the forest up and down hills.



Honeymoon hike



1952 Plymouth

A pale green Plymouth, a graduation/wedding gift from my parents, conveys us to Chicago after the honeymoon. As we approach Chicago's South Side Rodney says, "Remember, I warned you that Chicago apartments have been impossible to find. I spent months looking for this one so I hope it is ok."

My young, naive ears block out his word. Yet when he opens the door to our apartment at 72nd Street and South Shore Drive, I nearly turn and run.

Disbelief sweeps over me as I confront a scruffy, sagging faded tan sofa with springs hanging out the bottom.

A tiny dining area, a small dirty kitchen and a miniscule bathroom complete the space. "Where do we sleep?"

Rodney opens the closet door and pulls out a Murphy bed filling the living room. I have never seen such a contraption. *“What have I gotten myself into?”* The bed bumps right up against that ghastly sofa, barely leaving room to walk to the bathroom.

After my first stunned reaction, I decide, “We can make this our home.” Being newly wed and deeply in love soothes the way.

Daily I tackle the grime in our small apartment. I wipe off the sofa and try to figure out how to clean under it. I fear the springs will come clear out if I touch them. I push the shabby pillows around wrestling to make them look presentable. Futilely, I wage war on the black soot that drifts in around the windows from Chicago’s aging coal-burning power plants.

I don’t know another soul in Chicago. Thus our new life together begins.

The following spring the Santa Fe’s Transportation Department reassigns Rodney to Amarillo as a Traveling Car Agent. Relieved to leave the dingy Chicago apartment, we pack up, ship the Plymouth as freight and catch a train southwest to Amarillo. A simple duplex on the dusty barren-looking northern edge of Amarillo welcomes us.

That fall the Amarillo Globe reports a need for more teachers in the public schools. Rodney travels each week so I sign a contract to teach first grade in the neighborhood school. The children in my class have no kindergarten experience and few if any books are in their homes. This tough but rewarding job fulfills me as I watch them learn.

About the time school starts, I discover I am pregnant. We are both pleased and decide I can teach for several months.

I nearly lose the baby two months into my pregnancy. Doctor's orders, "Stay off your feet." Since no one can teach first grade sitting down, I have to quit my job.

The duplex has no room for a baby so on weekends we search for another place to live. We soon move to a small rental house on Monroe Street mid-town. This feels more like a real home. We are closer to the First Presbyterian Church and a shorter commute to the Santa Fe building.

Further doctor orders: "No traveling for the rest of your pregnancy." Not to travel to see my parents for Christmas strikes me as impossible. I gulp and realize if we want this baby, I must obey doctor's orders.

Rodney, ever the caring gentleman, organizes our Christmas. Four couples from the church come over one evening to indulge in an old-fashioned potluck supper by our Christmas tree. The scent of candles and glow of lights permeate the house with the feel of Christmas.

Our pile of presents from our families climbs higher. Long distance calls with various family members fill the void. We live through Christmas Day in the tenderness of true love.

By spring Rodney and his friend Ron are playing golf nearly every Saturday. One morning in June Rodney calls Ron and says, "I can't play golf this morning I have to take Priscilla to the hospital."

Ron asks in disgust, "What's wrong with her?" After Rodney

laughs at this ridiculous question, his nervousness balloons when he thinks of the coming birth

The 1954 Fathers Day edition of the Sunday *Amarillo Globe News* carries a picture of Rodney pointing to his new son, Ben in the hospital nursery. This makes us briefly famous.



Soon after Ben's birth, Rodney goes back on the road and I realize I know nothing about being a good mother. Books on the subject don't help. Jane my next-door neighbor comes forth with advice and tips. I relish her support and love the gifts of out-grown clothes from her boys age two, four and six. The antics of those three boys entertain Ben when boredom creeps in.



Ben showing Daddy his three friends next door

In the summer of 1956 Rodney comes home one evening with dramatic news. "The Santa Fe has assigned me back to Chicago. I'll be in charge of the Traveling Car Agents across the system. This is an amazing promotion, but it means leaving everything here."

Sadness at leaving our new friends accompanies a burst of pride at this promotion. We feel so at home in Amarillo that it comes as a jolt to move, but it never occurs to us to argue with the assignment.

I'll miss Jane and her three boys the most. She has given me so much confidence in mothering Ben.

Our family dreams that Rodney will travel less with more time at home. My body starts to bulge with another child coming in the fall as we prep for the move.

Rodney's friend Bill Paton in the Chicago Transportation Office is assigned to Rodney's task in Amarillo. Rodney calls, "Bill, where are you and your wife living now? Can we just switch our rented house for where you are living?" The Northwestern Commuter trains are convenient to Bill's apartment in Jefferson Park (Chicago) and switching housing sight unseen saves us all time and energy.

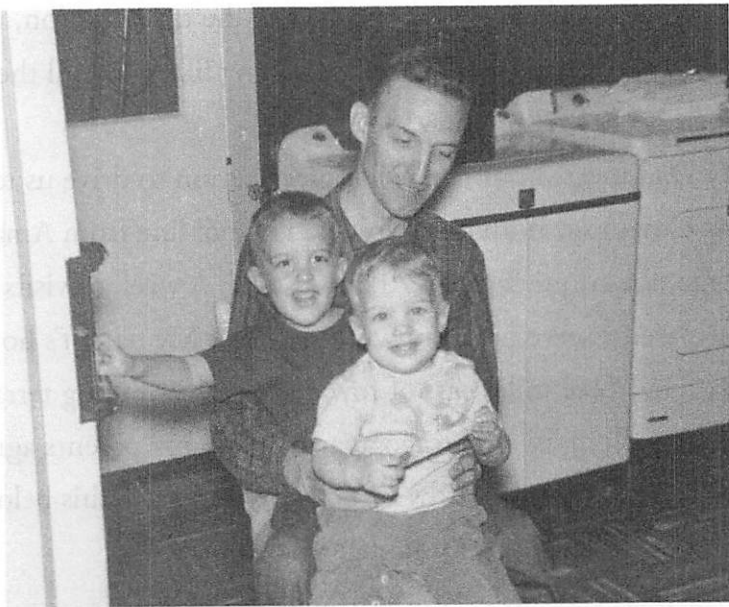
Rodney's pass on the railroad provides free transportation. We relish the comfort of a bedroom in the Pullman car as we watch the Oklahoma golden fields whiz past us.

Sandy, our cocker spaniel, terrified of the train motion, never sits or lies down as he stays standing, shaking like a leaf all the way from Amarillo to Wellington

My Dad meets us at the Wellington station to drive us to Arkansas City to see both our families. The rail line from Amarillo to Chicago doesn't go through Arkansas City. A week of visits with both our parents serves as an unwinding time. My parent's home on fifty-two acres three miles east of town offers great hiking terrain. We can't have a dog in a Chicago apartment so my parents agree to keep our cocker spaniel, Sandy. I find it hard to leave this beloved pet, but he will have a great home in the country.

My water breaks a couple of months after our move while two-year-old Ben and I shop in the drug store on Milwaukee Avenue. I return to the apartment to telephone Rodney (no cell phones). His walk across the Loop and North Western train ride to Jefferson Park takes a little more than an hour. In Swedish Covenant Hospital on Foster Avenue a little after midnight, September 25, 1956 Tim arrives.

Three years later, after we've purchased a house and moved, a big scare hits. Rodney develops a high fever and headache. He becomes sicker than I've ever seen him. A complication common to grown men (swelling of testicles) indicates mumps, which he missed as a child. When not caring for him, I pace the back yard praying. We both sigh in relief as healing works miracles. After a little more than a week he returns to work with no left over outcomes of his illness.



Rodney enjoys time with Ben and Tim.

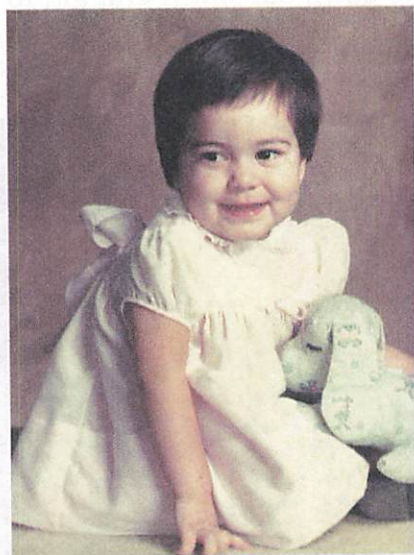
Giving, especially at Christmas, remains high on our priority list. One year we cut out and paint a large plywood snowman to wave to all who drive down our street. Our gift to the neighborhood gratifies us and pleases the neighbors.



Our attitude toward money begins to shift. Giving gradually makes more sense than being tight fisted. We've heard, "to one who has much, much is required." Over the years this mantra makes increasing sense to us.

An empty hole in our family expands as we yearn for a daughter. Finally we say to each other, "There are plenty of children on the planet. Let's adopt a little girl." After several months of interviews, the caseworker shows us a picture that captures our hearts. The boys agree that a baby sister will be, "OK". After

more months of process in June 1964 we welcome a nine-month old girl, Mary into our family.⁹



Mary Helyn Wilson



*Ben, Mary, and
Rodney*

Visits to Arkansas City continue to be times of fun and laughter. At the Hutchinson's house watching cattle with Granddaddy and

⁹ Read *Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya, from Ecuador to Ethiopia* for the whole story of Mary's adoption.

fishing in the pond with Mommommy fill the hours. Ben, Tim and Mary love hikes and exploration in the pasture.

At the Wilson's we laugh until our sides nearly split as Rodney, his dad and brothers regale us with jokes and stories we have heard over and over.



Enjoying the sun in the country.

Ben, Tim and Mary each cherish their personal time with their father in Chicago's Loop on Saturday mornings. To go to work with Daddy means a commuter ride on the North Western Railway. The walk across the Loop brings them to the white terracotta building with its row of round windows under the tall sign on top, "Railway Exchange Building." They each love the white-glazed brick and the round fountain in the center of the grand foyer.

They ride the elevator to Rodney's office on the eleventh floor and then scurry to the windows to scrutinize the two bronze lions that flank the Art Institute's entrance across the street. They

excitedly gaze at Lake Michigan to see how many sail boats they can discover. The crowded traffic up and down Michigan Avenue provides unending fascination.

They spend the rest of the morning playing with the monstrous noisy adding machine, dropping mail down the shoot in the hallway and finally going to the first floor for a cup of hot chocolate in the café with its vinyl booths.

During the early years together, as much as we love each other, we don't know much about making a marriage work. We know that we are both learning. At times when someone has to stay home with the children, arguments arise. Rodney argues, "I earn the money, I have to go to work." I argue, "But I've made a commitment, it is important for me to go do this." Without too much heat, we figure it out.

As Rodney and I talk together about those first years of our marriage we realize unexpected turns beckoned. Paths we travel and didn't see coming or expect often startle us. As a couple we develop survival skills as we establish our home, and relationships with friends and community.

Fortunately both sets of our parents serve as models of married life. However, we soon intuit a difference emerging between the 1920's and 1960's. Images of "bread winner" and "home maker" make sense for a while. In time we sense a calling in life beyond our immediate family. We have family, health, happiness, opportunities, and wealth by the earth's standards. The life-long struggle to give back beyond the known and familiar summons on the horizon.

Creating our Home 1956

We spent a pleasant, relaxing week with our parents in Arkansas City before journeying on to northwest Chicago's Jefferson Park. Before leaving Amarillo we had contracted, sight unseen, for a small, five room, up two flights of stairs city apartment. The space will be tight when our second child arrives.

After Tim's birth in September we start searching for a house.

Norwood Park, the next community northwest, beckons with its overarching trees, expansive lawns, curved streets and gracious homes.

We find a two story gray frame house that interests us. The location is good and the price is manageable. But it comes with a disturbing history. The wife, killed in a Chicago Theater fire, left behind a husband and grown son who disliked each other. The neglected house deteriorates. Every inch needs repair, paint and cleaning. None of our family or friends approve of this house. But we like its full attic and large basement. It intrigues us and we want to buy it. Its perfect location on an elongated lot on North East Circle puts us within a block of both the school and Presbyterian Church.

We ask a construction engineer to check out the house. Mr. Lies, a large, gruff looking, soft-spoken gentleman surveys the interior, and then walks through the basement waving his cigar around to watch where the smoke drifts. He finally declares, "This house is structurally sound. You just have peeling paint, dirt, and disrepair in every part. If you can handle that I recommend you buy it."

We buy our first home on North East Circle in Chicago's Norwood Park for \$13,000 in 1957. Though we face a daunting task with the vast amount of work that must be done, we are still young enough to believe we can do anything.

I have no experience of "doing it myself" and Rodney has no experience of having money to hire someone. By trial and error we learn how to work together and how to tackle the repairs needed. The carpentry skills that Rodney learned from Grandpa Baldwin become essential. Things we don't know how to do, we learn as we figure it out.

Electricity is our most daunting need. Upstairs has no wired electricity. A lamp cord runs from a living room outlet up the stairs to a lamp in our bedroom. With a two-year old boy and a new baby, this can't be acceptable. I call an electrician. When he mentions \$25.00 a hole, I know we can't afford this. We puzzle what to do.

Our new neighbor, Fred Schwaneke an electrical engineer with Sun Electric, comes to the rescue.

"Rodney, I won't wire your house, but I can teach you how." Thus a new avocation begins for Rodney. He learns and wires the whole house, developing a love for this new talent. His belief in doing the right job in the right place serves us well.

A dilapidated, gray wooden platform with rickety wooden steps is all that remains of a once large front porch. It screams for attention. A few weeks after we move in, my heel goes through the porch platform. We organize our neighbors for a party of beer and

pizza and tear down the porch. Swinging sledgehammers and saws soon produce a stack of old gray wood. Several neighbors with a fireplace take wood, the rest we haul to the dumpster.

We now have a front door about three feet up from the ground with no steps. So for several months we use our back door.

Every pay-day, Rodney buys a new tool (twice a month) and his pile of sockets and screw drivers grows. He constantly has a ladder or hammer in his hands. He keeps tools in his tool belt, the basement and his car. His talents multiply in a swirl of building and repairing.

During this period, most of his Santa Fe work is from the main office in Chicago. His spare hours are full with tackling the needs of our house.

During the next thirteen years we spend all our spare time bringing this ramshackle two-story gray-shingled house up to snuff. We become an efficient team as we scrub, scrape, caulk, and paint every inch of the interior. I become an excellent hand with spackle and paint brush. The entry hall's ghastly orange walls and shiny black stairway demand attention. The gorgeous, oak wood of the stair rail and steps beckons visitors when the shiny black paint is gone. Mellow tan walls complete the transformation of the entry hall.

Rodney's building skills range far beyond repair and paint. Over the next few years he builds an extensive closet for our bedroom and a joint closet for Ben and Tim that connects their bedrooms. Mahogany bookshelves and a love seat in the living



room add classy touches to an ordinary room. He and two friends build a two-car garage by the alley at the end of our long lot, saving our car from the extremes of Chicago winters. A playhouse near the garage fills many an hour with laughter and play.



I watch in absolute terror when Rodney climbs our highest ladder to paint the four high peaks holding the roof in place. Fortunately, my holding my breath helps him safely descend the four times in one piece.

Scraping and painting walls fill many hours. Sore muscles and tired bodies multiply for us both. We grow to love that house and it never occurs to us that we bit off more than we could chew. We discover new strengths in our relationship as we work to exhaustion on every room in the house.

Employed by the Santa Fe Railway 1953-1986

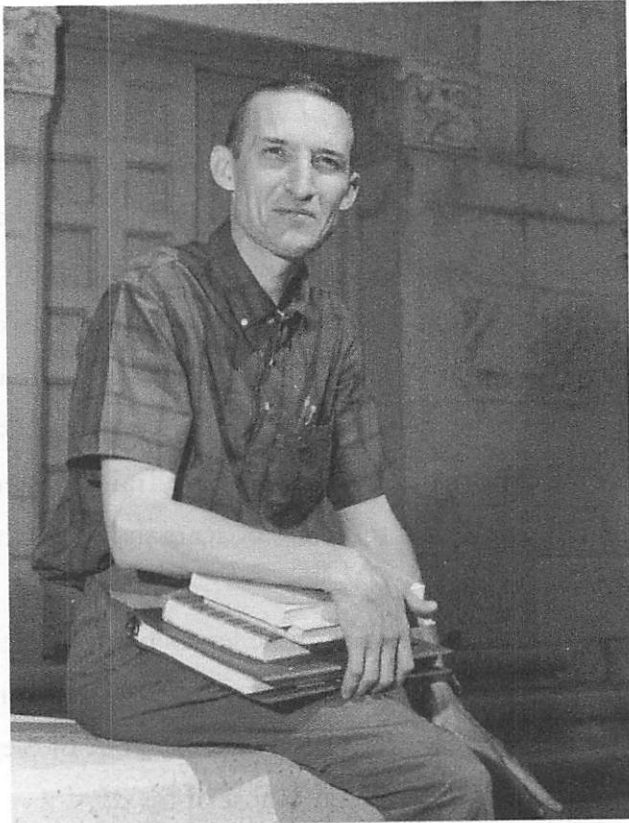
The upward trajectory of Rodney's journey with the Santa Fe begins after we've only been married six months. Rodney comes home and announces, "Mr. Mahoney is reassigning me to Amarillo as a Traveling Car Agent. Such an unexpected promotion caught me off guard. I will be the communication link for the railroad's Plains Division. My responsibility will stretch from Waynoka Oklahoma to Clovis New Mexico. I will need to connect Train Masters, Freight Yards and the Chicago office to insure boxcars show up where and when needed."

We arrive in Amarillo and soon he leaves by train each Monday morning and returns Friday afternoons. Communicating and coordinating links for movements of potash out of New Mexico and the wheat rush in Oklahoma fill most of his days.

Rodney's uniform becomes khaki pants and a navy blue blazer which serves him well whether with work crews in the rail yards or holding meetings in management offices.

The next abrupt move occurs in 1956 when he returns to Chicago as the Supervisor of Freight Car Distribution. Now he manages all of the Traveling Car Agents across the railroad.

Rodney's college degree adds to his self-confidence. He holds the only college degree in the Santa Fe's Transportation Department, a plus for his career.



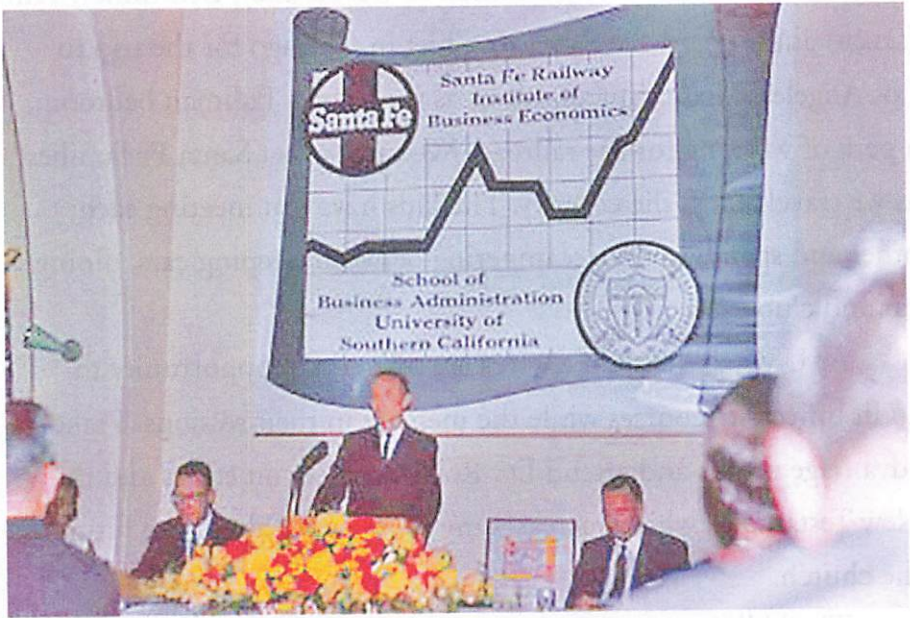
In 1963 the Santa Fe Railway selects Rodney to join a team of managers in a six-week program of business, management and economics at the University of Southern California (USC). The invitation includes wives and children so we: Rodney, Ben (nine), Tim (seven) and I board the Santa Fe Chief in Chicago for the trip to Los Angeles. Luxury surrounds us as we enjoy a Pullman bedroom, a perk of working for the railroad. We meet other Santa Fe families as we travel across the country. The kids have fun meeting each other and spending time scampering between sleeping cars, dining car and club cars.

At USC, the Santa Fe wives are offered the opportunity to audit university courses while the men are in their sessions. I take advantage of this and attend Dr. Robb's courses on ethics and the New Testament, which increases my puzzlement about the future of the church.

The kid's programs include a wide variety of activities. They announce one day, "All the families get to go to Disneyland this Friday."

Each man gives several speeches during the six weeks. One was to be on "Demonstration." "Demonstrating How to Give a Haircut" is Rodney's topic. He begins with, "Since I was unable to get any one in this class to let me demonstrate on them personally, naturally I had to go elsewhere." Rodney uses a coconut as the "head" for his haircut and fills the room with laughter.

Rodney is chosen to give the graduation speech to reflect on their time together. His humor and practical sense elicits enthusiastic praise.¹⁰



I watch men listen intently when Rodney shares stories full of practical wisdom and humor. His expanded self-confidence at USC evolves into defining abilities to meet the unexpected throughout his life.

In the Chicago Transportation Department, women traditionally serve as stenographers. When Rodney notices them waiting to be told what to do, he calls a meeting. "The railroad is a tool to help feed and clothe people. It is a false myth that a woman can't

¹⁰ Rodney's closing speech at USC is included in the Appendix.

be anything but a stenographer. I started as a stenographer in this department. It was a training job for moving on to bigger things. You can speak up, make decisions and offer your ideas on what needs to be done.” They begin to discover they have something to say in the workplace. A couple of the women are surprised when they are promoted.

His profound love of local people and strong distaste for social climbers evolves during his career at the Santa Fe. His passion for calling out the best in other people unfolds. Over the years he articulates five values he works by:

- You can never have too many contacts
- Avoid burning bridges
- It is easier to apologize than to get permission
- Be responsible for your own decisions and actions
- Make heroes of the team members.”

Through Rodney’s working years in Chicago several incidents haunt him. One morning while walking to the North Western commuter train in Norwood Park, he watches in dismay as an elderly gentleman, not hearing or paying attention, steps in front of an approaching train. Besides the dreadfulness of that man’s death, Rodney can’t forget the anguish the train’s engineer experiences.

On an Oklahoma rural road he sees a van with children go around the barrier when one train has gone by. They didn’t notice the second track and another fast train smashes into them.

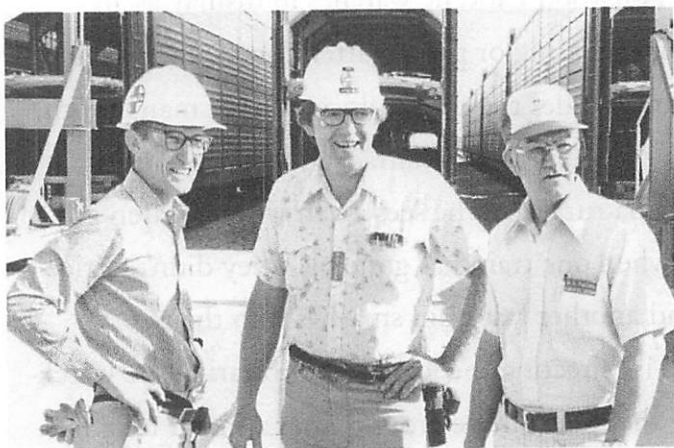
Rodney assists in directing the logistics for clearing the wreckage and supporting the folks on the ground after a major freight

train wreck near Needles California. Every time that memory of carnage and chaos returns Rodney has nightmares.

These stories break his heart. Each incident resulted from someone venturing into the wrong space at the wrong time.

During Rodney's last twelve years with the railroad, automotive equipment becomes his responsibility. Then in 1982, the railroad transfers the whole Transportation Department to Kansas City Kansas. Our lives began in Kansas and as we age, with our children gone, returning to Kansas feels like going home.

During his last years with the railroad, Rodney manages the Santa Fe's relationships with the automotive industry. The new Ford Motor Company in Oklahoma City demands much of his time in the early 1980s. For a while we worry that he will be asked to move. He spends days with General Motors as they refurbish and add on to that manufacturing plant. Fortunately it continues to be a "fly to Oklahoma City" job.



Rodney with two Ford employees at the Oklahoma City Ford Plant.

Rodney's business card soon reads, "Manager Automotive Operations and Military Equipment."

Rodney spends time at Ft. Hood Texas and he brags, "Major General George Smith Patton is in charge of the Second Armored Division at Fort Hood Texas. He spent a couple of hours with me and gave me an autographed picture. He looks so much like and acts like his father, General Patton, who we saw in the movie. I have so admired him and talking with his son was a treat."

A General Patton quote gains a position of importance on Rodney's desk,

"One does not plan and then try to make circumstances fit those plans. One tries to make plans fit the circumstances. I think the difference between success and failure in high command depends upon the ability, or lack of it, to do just that."

— General George S Patton

One day he spends an hour and a half sharing with me a painful task he has with the military. His frustration bubbles over as he says, "I have to show men from the White House the caves here in Kansas City. They are looking for a place to hide missiles and other military equipment. I don't like the thought of being part of such an operation. I don't want to be involved in the possibility of Kansas City becoming a military target."

"I am ready for my retirement letter. I think that forty years with the company is enough. I am ready to invent a new life."

When he retires in 1986 he says, "It is the first time in the 20th Century that someone in the Wilson family isn't working for the Santa Fe Railway."

Participating in the Church 1953

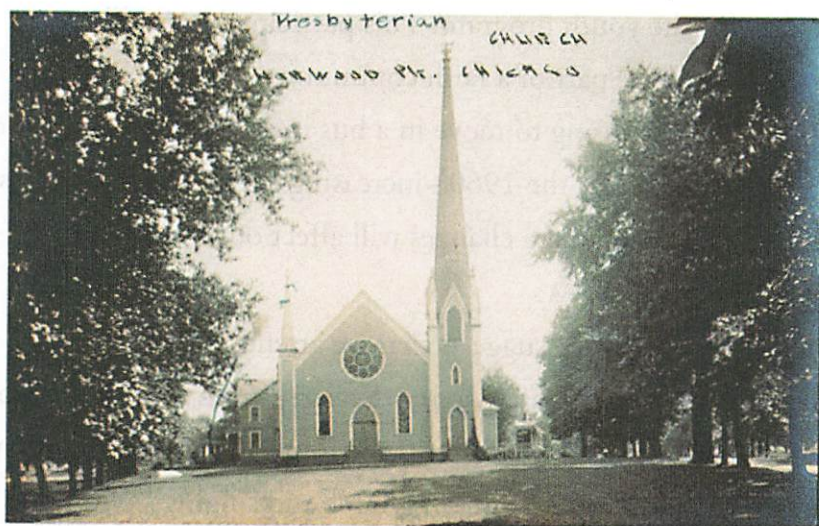
During the early 1950's both Rodney and I start raising questions about our faith.

In our Sunday School class, we discuss questions such as: "What do you suppose being a community of faith means?" "What should church folks do?" "What's the role of laypeople in the church?"

Our thoughts often wander to issues beyond our personal lives. We grew up in a non-questioning environment, so new and strange thoughts are intruding. "What might it look like to pay attention to needs beyond our family? It is easy to give to causes, but how do we respond to urban issues on our own doorstep?"

When we move to our new home in Norwood Park, the Norwood Park Presbyterian Church pastor and congregation welcome us. The music and style of worship are familiar so we feel at home. Set back on a large triangular expanse of green grass the tall white steeple invites our participation.

We were both raised Presbyterian and church matters. Going to worship on Sunday mornings makes sense to us. In 1959 we support a major Capitol Campaign. On Easter Sunday 1960



Rodney, puts on a hard hat and digs deep with his shovel as part of the Ground Breaking Ceremony for our new church building. He is active on a number of committees and serves two terms on the Session, the church's governing body. I sing in the choir and provide



leadership for the youth program. This participation fulfills our need to be an active part of a faith community.

Rosa Parks refusing to move in a bus in 1955 triggers waves of civil rights tremors. By the 1960's increasing turmoil spreads across the nation. We know these changes will affect our lives, but don't know how.

In 1965 our pastor suggests that we attend the National Council of Churches Conference on Evangelism in Wisconsin. For the first time the racial unrest across the south becomes more than a news event. Speakers, discussion groups and singing, "We Shall Overcome" set our minds swirling. Our sheltered middle class white world begins to crack and we start to understand situations radically different from our own. Spending time with Gayraud Wilmore¹¹ one of the presenters, helps us fathom the urban unrest spreading beyond the news stories.

We experience the racial unrest personally in 1966. Rodney, as a Session member supports hiring a youth minister. Several candidates receive phone interviews. The Session invites Peter Paris, his wife and three year old daughter to come to Norwood Park to serve as our youth minister. When church members discover that a black Canadian and his white wife have arrived, many are outraged and leave the church.

We look out the window one night and are surprised to see a cross burning on our front lawn. We had seen pictures of crosses in

11 Gayraud Wilmore, named executive director of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA) newly created The Commission on Religion and Race.

the south, but never expected to see one in our neighborhood. We have become good friends with the Paris family and someone's anger seems to blame us for a black pastor and his white wife coming to our church. We should have been scared as smoke drifted down the street, but we worried about the Paris's safety, We notice a couple of neighbors out looking, but no one ever mentioned it to us.

The church is a center of our lives. Rodney enjoys serving as a Cub Scout leader and lends a hand with the church's Boy Scout program. The camping weekends with the scouts spark high spirits and clowning fun.

One father-son camping weekend at Starved Rock becomes a much talked about memory. The boys take pride in cooking a French toast and bacon breakfast for their dads. The fathers suppress their laughter as they receive their breakfast plate. The boy's fingers that dipped the bread into the egg and milk mixture shine with a new cleanliness. The egg mixture soaked dirt off their fingers leaving the upper hands and wrists quite grimy.

Our social life enlarges as we join Art and Marian Lies to form the Mariners, a young couples club through the church. Different couples assume responsibility for the monthly meetings that provide opportunities for fellowship and service. We become close friends with the couples in the group as we share times of serving food in a neighborhood center, helping the elderly with house repairs, and visiting those suffering illness or loss.

A shocking blow occurs in 1965, when Ken and Roberta Grand are serving as Mariner skippers (leaders). We look out the

window one Saturday morning and Rodney worriedly says, “Ken’s car isn’t parked out front. He always parks there. What do you suppose has happened?”

We join Roberta for a cup of coffee in the afternoon and she says, “Late last night Ken was driving home on the Kennedy Expressway from Chicago’s south side after taking a deposition. The light rain shifted to ice about the time he got near his exit. The car spun out of control and he evidently died instantly.”

Losing our next-door neighbor and close friend in death devastates us and forces us to face our own mortality. The rapidity of change and finality of cut-offness sears a wound in our youthful optimism. Ben and their son Eric are school buddies so this death overwhelms our whole family.

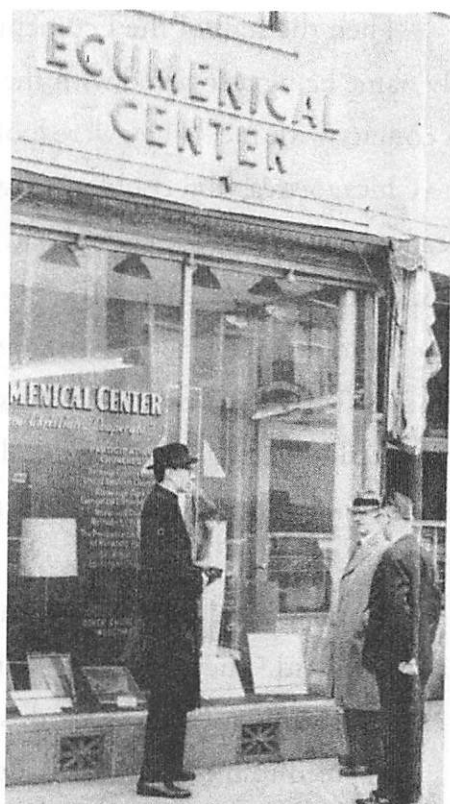
In 1982, the Santa Fe transfers the Transportation Department to Kansas City Kansas. We purchase a home on Tomahawk Road in Mission Hills. We immediately become active in Village Presbyterian Church, appreciating the four-block walk from our house. The years of committees, serving on the Session, ushering, studying, and singing with the choir expand our opportunities of service with this mission church on Mission Road. We have discovered the church home for the rest of our lives...twenty-nine years for Rodney.

Shifting Roles 1962

By the mid-1960s urban issues and church renewal questions are in the air. Norwood Park clergy and their congregations band together and rent a store to begin a unique experiment, the Ecumenical Center of Norwood Park. The five churches involved include St. Alban's Episcopal Church, the United Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the United Lutheran Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Two mutual concerns motivate this experiment: the problem of Christian division and the apparent inadequacy of churches to effectively reach the growing

number of the unchurched. Located in the heart of the Norwood Park business section, the Center provides ecumenical information, discussion, and exploration. Volunteers keep the Center open and reach out to those not touched by the more conventional programs of the churches.¹²



¹² *Anglican Advance* : the magazine of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Chicago, September, 1962

One day our pastor calls Rodney. "Some men from Chicago's Ecumenical Institute want to talk with you," he says.

Rodney's name pops up because he is listed as President of Norwood Park's Ecumenical Center. He remembered his first steps with the Ecumenical Institute.

"I first met people from the Ecumenical Institute in 1962. Five churches in our neighborhood had rented a vacant storefront. We planned to turn it into a reading room and gathering place. We named it the Ecumenical Center. I represented our church, Norwood Park Presbyterian and was elected president of the board of the Center.

Then the staff of the Ecumenical Institute arrived in Chicago. My name being associated with the word ecumenical put them in contact with me. They were looking for church laymen across the Chicago area who could work with them on church renewal. Reading about church renewal had left Priscilla and me wondering about our roles in the church.

I met with several of the staff who said, 'The Church Federation of Greater Chicago invited us to come to Chicago. They are interested in having an Ecumenical Institute here modeled after the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland.'

Joe Slicker led the group with Fred Buss, Don Warren and Frank Hilliard. They were contacting church laymen across the area to start a board of directors for this Ecumenical Institute.

I agreed to meet with them at the Church Federation office

on Michigan Avenue. Fred Buss arranged a lunch to meet with Joe Matthews, the Director of the Institute.

Joe said, 'We plan to hold classes for laymen, and would like to know if you are willing to serve on our Board of Directors.'

'You are asking the wrong person. Priscilla is really the church one in the family.'

Joe didn't buy that so I became a board member. The other board members were David Wood, Paul Eartle, Betty Pesek, Ted Swain and Michael Borge. Betty Pesek was the only woman. They were more interested in laymen than women.

I was elected treasurer of the board. Not knowing anything about an organization's treasury issues, I went to one of our top auditors at the Santa Fe and asked him what needed to be done. He said, 'The first thing is be sure you have an audit and get all the books clean.'

When I bring that up in the next board meeting, Mathews in exasperation says, 'You don't understand what we are about. We are going to revolutionize a lot of church activities and having auditors look at the books isn't needed. We'll do our own auditing.'

I thought this sounded strange, but I didn't know enough to argue."

The Institute asks to hold religious courses in the Ecumenical Center in Norwood Park to explore the relationship of faith to daily life. Their initial course, Religious Studies1 (RS-1) included writings by major theologians, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoffer, Soren Kierkegaard and H. Richard Niebuhr.

This eight-week course blows new life into our family as we ponder anew what the realities of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and Church mean.

This course inspires us to ask:

- What does it mean to be a human being?
- How do we say 'yes' to life as it is?
- How do we make responsible decisions?

Using the Ecumenical Center for the eight-week course becomes difficult for Rodney. He arrives home from work, eats a quick supper, goes to our church and hauls tables and chairs in our station wagon to the Ecumenical Center. They insisted on tables in a square to facilitate dialogue.

Rodney finally sits them all down one night and says, "We're going to have to just use chairs. I can't be expected to be hauling all these tables back and forth."

They reply, "We'll rent them if we can't use your church's tables and chairs."

Of course, Rodney's sense of responsibility and doing what is needed kicked in and he went ahead and moved tables and chairs for the first eight-week course at the Ecumenical Center...and then for the second eight-week course.

Our thinking changes after the Institute's RS-1 course. We both grew up in families of Christian faith and had not questioned what we believed. It had become ingrained in our childhoods. Rote recitation of prayers and creeds didn't seem strange.

What did it mean to live a Christian life and be active as the

church? What did any of that mean for our lives Monday through Friday? Our sense of local responsibility takes on a more global perspective. We pay increasing attention to life beyond just our family and community.”

Starting in 1970 Rodney and I shift our involvement with the traditional church. Many weekends we join the Institute staff and other colleagues to create and teach courses, and work with people we didn't expect to ever meet (both in suburbia and the inner city). Our concerns increasingly focus on the overall renewal of the church to address spirit emptiness and issues of urban communities.

Rodney understood that God claimed him when his parents held him before the baptismal font as an infant. He says, “I am a card-carrying Presbyterian. That baptism was the moment I was called to service.” Our understanding of the use of time and resources broadens beyond our own family and community. We experience a real leap of faith as we try to discern what God calls us to do? A different level of compassion has been awakened for us both.

Most of my life I spent with this man. The amount of respect he showed to others, whether a local villager or a person of high position, continued to be uncanny. One mantra he lived by from early in his life, “Make a hero of the others involved in a situation.” This remains his code of service throughout his life and a theme through the following years.

Birth of the North Shore Cadre 1967

In 1964 the Ecumenical Institute purchases an abandoned seminary building in Chicago's west-side ghetto that is known as Fifth City. As the community becomes the Institute's first comprehensive community development project, it is named Fifth City.

Early 1967, I attend an Institute program called "the Trilogy," designed to recruit and involve suburban women in the urban community. During three Wednesday luncheons in April both local women and Institute staff share concerns of the urban ghetto with one hundred women from the Chicago area.

Following the Trilogy, thirty women, eager to address urban issues, gather once a week to discover how they can be a part of the Institute's mission. Joe Mathews, the Dean of the Institute, suggests the women put out a mailing. Stuffing envelopes and licking stamps doesn't fit everyone's idea of significant urban engagement.

A fall session finally invites volunteers to help in Fifth City programs. I volunteer in the pre-school once a week and our daughter, Mary, age four, participates in the class when I am there. Each week, after a day of wiping noses and ushering kids in and out of activities, I load broken tricycles into my station wagon. Rodney repairs and salvages parts so that two broken trikes become one workable vehicle. He comments, "I think you are running a demolition derby instead of a preschool."¹³

In April 1968, the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. generates

13 "Rocket Ship" in *Everyday Wonder* by Kaze Gadway and Priscilla H Wilson tells a story of the 5th City Preschool.

riots across the country. Fifth City becomes a center of upheaval as the riots spread.

The Institute Staff asks us to not continue active participation in the urban project. Instead, we meet once a week in the suburbs for study and planning. Our dialogue zeros in on shifting women's roles and we begin to focus on questions of women's self-esteem and significant engagement in relation to urban issues.

We study Kazantzakis, *Saviors of God* at the suggestion of the Institute staff which opens a deepening awareness of the journey of the spirit. We admire his call to service, "At every moment of crisis an array of men (people) risk their lives," "What are we to do at this time?" We call ourselves the New Woman's Forum and we support Fifth City from the suburbs.

By the fall of 1968, the "new women" decide we should have a party so our husbands can meet. Nicki Dresslar says, "Okay, let's have a cocktail party at my home in Park Ridge."

Two couples come from the Institute, Joe Mathews, Charles Moore and their wives. Rodney says afterwards, "A fascinating evening, meeting all those different people. They are a neat bunch."

Early in January, ten couples gather at the Dresslar's farm near Crystal Lake for a weekend of getting to know each other. Joe Mathews shares Fifth City plans and issues. Joe's energetic affirmation communicates a compelling invitation for the men to be supportive of Fifth City .

The weekend closes Sunday noon as all prepare to go home

to watch the Super Bowl. But before we close, Don Moffett stands up and asks a question individually of each person. "Do you want to continue to meet together each week to study and plan how we support Fifth City?" Only two couples say, "No."

Sixteen of us start meeting once a week at the Pesek's house on Waukegan Road in Lake Forest. All the men have successful jobs, but join their wives in yearning for additional ways to serve the community. We study Kenneth Bouldings, *Meaning of the Twentieth Century* to push our thinking into new arenas. Rodney and I wonder if we're ready to learn the Institute's courses so we can teach others.

Our group becomes known as the North Shore Cadre. We often participate in weekend courses with the Institute in Fifth City: cultural studies, individual and the family, world religions, and imaginal education. Rodney and I take training courses so we can teach church groups across the country.

Throughout the 70's and 80's Rodney and I treasure collegiality and increasing involvement with the North Shore Cadre and Ecumenical Institute. We relish sharing our experiences with each other.

We spend many weekends working at the Institute or with lay people and clergy in local churches in other cities deepening spirit and their missional efforts.

When both are involved in weekend programs one of the Cadre couples cares for the young children.

One Sunday evening Rodney returns from a weekend in

Boston. “Mimi and I were the only two pedagogues who showed up to teach RS-1. The other two couldn’t come at the last minute. The two of us alternated between the lectures and the study of the theologian’s writings. I felt overwhelmed at first, but it turned out to be a great weekend.”



The North Shore Cadre

*Len Dresslar, Betty Pesek, George McBurney, LaVerne Phillips, Betty Hill,
Don Moffett, Mary Warren Moffett, Jim Phillips, Rodney Wilson, Nicki Dresslar,
Priscilla Wilson, Sheldon Hill, Jana McBurney.*

Slowly care for the broader world takes hold within our hearts. We approach decision making with more intentionality as we struggle to observe situations, judge what is going on, weigh up our options, decide the course to take, and act on our decision.

As we study Dietrich Bonhoeffer in RS-1, his description of responsibility as the creative tension between freedom (doing only what we want to do) and obedience (doing what is needed) undergirds new ways to think about how to respond to innocent suffering in the world.

The North Shore Cadre and Ecumenical Institute become an integral part of our lives for the next twenty years. Much of what we learn during those years shapes our understanding and actions the rest of our lives.

A Trip Around the World . . . A Global Odyssey 1970

After a sleepless night winging our way over the Pacific Ocean, Rodney stares out the plane window. “Look across that water. Those tall buildings have to be downtown Tokyo. The clouds almost make Mt. Fuji disappear.”

We are on a twenty-one day trip around the world with nine suburban couples. When someone first suggested this trip, Rodney and I struggled with whether we could manage financially. Finally after much discussion, we use the money we have saved for our children’s education.

During this trip, designed with the Ecumenical Institute we hope to discover how a group of suburbanites can see the world differently. We divide into four teams, each team to study one section of the globe and be in charge during that portion of the trip.

The Institute sends two staff women to live with the children at our house while we are gone. They follow our route and plan activities and meals to match our journey.

We embark from Chicago on March 19, 1970 on a “Global Odyssey.”

After Tokyo customs plunges us into chaos, we travel by bus to our hotel. Weaving through heavy traffic, the bus becomes stuck between two walls while rounding a sharp curve in the street. We watch the bus driver and a policeman calmly discussing what to do. Finally, we get off the bus and walk ten minutes through the narrow streets to our hotel.

Our cultural immersion begins with a visit to the Shinto Shrine of the Great Buddha of Kamakura, one of the icons of Japan. Crowds of pilgrims and tourists surround us in amazing politeness as we walk up the long flight of steps. Japan overwhelms our senses with unreadable language on every sign, and sharp smells of incense floating in the air.

The next day the chill of the March wind sweeps over us as Rodney and I walk through the Ueno Zoological Gardens. We love zoos and decide this adventure gives us a sociable way to observe young Japanese families. The children with pudgy red cheeks and polite behavior as they walk with their parents fascinate us.

Next we board Japan's famous bullet train zipping southwest of Tokyo to Kyoto. What a way to spend my thirty-ninth birthday. As we enjoy a quiet lunch of undon noodles, tempura and sashimi we glance out the window. Mt Fuji comes into view as Rodney starts singing, "Happy Birthday." What a stunning present.

An argument over nothing the first day in Kyoto sends us in separate ways for the day. Rodney, interested in Japanese business joins several others to visit the Sharp factory, a company manufacturing precision measuring instruments and medical equipment.

I join other colleagues to travel to the little village of Nara, an early Japanese capitol. Walking through ancient quiet temples, sublime gardens and colorful shrines reveals a deeper, quieter side of this ancient people.

At the end of the day Rodney and I trade stories and recognize the gift of sharing these experiences. We agree to give up petty fights.

Each morning the group reflects on our experiences during breakfast. One person guides the conversation by asking, "What is one thing you remember from yesterday? What excited you? What disturbed you? What did you learn about these people, about yourself?" The unfamiliarity of the culture in Japan has hit us with culture shock.¹⁴ We struggle with how exotic this unfamiliar culture seems.

The next day we fly to Hong Kong. The hills rise up beyond the tightly packed buildings. Splotches of green are scattered

¹⁴ Culture shock is the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to a visit to a new country, or simply travel to another type of life. Wikipedia

throughout and the shimmering blue of the bay holds it all together. The hotel personnel collect our passports to be “processed” when we check in which send shivers of uneasiness rippling through our group. None of us like turning loose of our passports.

Our bus tour of the New Territories stops first at the Resettlement Estates where 35,000 of the poor and displaced live. These gray, drab high-rise dwellings house the thousands of refugees pouring in from China. Slight balcony railings serve as clotheslines for many of the occupants.



Near the water Rodney and I stroll down a small strip of sand and stop to watch our friend Len standing frozen at the end

of the peninsula. A small beggar girl holds out her hand and looks up at him. Our sympathy goes out to Len who looks lost in indecision. "My stomach turns over at the sight of such small children begging," Rodney comments.

Next we drive to the border between China and Hong Kong, still a British territory. We walk up the hill to look out onto a wide stretch of fenced green farmland with several small villages on the horizon. Rodney asks, "Do you suppose they decided to process our documents this morning so we wouldn't have them with us now?"

Later, we meet Pastor Kwok, a colleague of the Hong Kong Ecumenical Institute staff. He joins us for dinner, after which we walk to his church in the resettlement area, dodging the heavy traffic as we go. The Maundy Thursday service is similar to ours, but we strain to keep track of the service in the Chinese liturgy.

Rodney and I take the ferry from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island and ride a tram to the peak. As we step from the tram, we walk a while in utter silence and then stand still feeling a rush of emotion at the beauty below us. Rodney mutters, "What a spectacular view of that harbor. All those boats going back and forth between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island look like wind-up toys. Such a contrast to what we saw yesterday."

Back in Kowloon, we hop on a streetcar and decide to ride to the end of the line and back. The huge crowds of people on the streetcar and walking the streets, strike us and we wonder, "Do the Asian people enjoy any private space as we understand it?" We gaze down into the sampans on the waterfront. We laugh and play a

game we often play at home, we make up stories about the families we see. Although, here we feel slightly guilty window peeping.

The trip plan lists Cambodia next. However, the day we are to fly there the Cambodian government closes its borders.¹⁵

We are all bitterly disappointed, we had wanted to visit the ancient ruins of the once great kingdom, Angkor Wat.

Rodney, looking at the positive side of the situation, says, “We’ll have an extra day in both Hong Kong and Bangkok. This will give us some time to relax.”

A day of lounging around the swimming pool at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok lifts our spirits. We watch the boat traffic on the Chao Phraya River, especially intrigued by an older woman in a wide-brimmed straw hat, serving as a taxi poling back and forth across the river.

Rodney and I wander through the city. The streets are congested with automobiles and bicycles, but it doesn’t seem as frenetic as either Tokyo or Hong Kong. The graciousness and beauty in the smiles of the people heightens our sense of delight.

As we talk about our reactions, I recognize the wall of protection I construct to block out offending sounds, smells and sights. Intellectually I observe my surroundings but try to stay aloof and non-engaged. Rodney relates to people and situations much more personally and I struggle to emulate his carefree stance.

¹⁵ We had no way of knowing then that the Cambodian borders would be closed for the next twenty-five years.

A group trip to Ayundhya, an ancient capital of Siam astounds us with its ageless spires of temples and rows of Buddha statues. A strange sense of quiet permeates the area. As we stroll through the ancient ruins Rodney says, "I feel like we are confronting sheer mystery." An uncanny sense of timelessness sweeps through us as we look at the reclining Buddha.

Next we fly to Calcutta (now Kolkata). On the bus from the airport I clutch Rodney's hand. I feel slammed into a brick wall by the heat, the crowds, the hawking, the begging, the hostility and the utter hopelessness of the situation.

I rush by the floor scrubbers and sanders at the Oberi Hotel, startled to see them digging a swimming pool by hand. I try frantically to shut out the sounds. The men staring frighten me and I walk behind Rodney for protection. Only later do I realize none of them would have thought of harming me.

That first afternoon we leave the hotel and walk down the street. So many humans lying on the sidewalk make it hard to move through the crowds. A bubble of fear explodes in my stomach as I step over an old man. One old woman who is a riot of wrinkles grabs Rodney's arm. He gently pulls away and moves on. The difficulty of turning away from a begging woman as she clutches you stops us for a moment. More chaos, noise, and begging almost hide the noisy demonstration. I try not to see the mass of yelling and flag bearing men parading down the street. None of the noise, sights, or smells make sense and all seems to blend together in a chaotic cacophony.

We return to the hotel and discover we were not supposed to go out on the street because of the demonstrations following an attempted assassination of one of the Communist leaders.

That evening I try to describe my unnerving torment to Rodney, “Driving in from the airport, the poverty jarred me. Then when we got to the hotel, there were all those guys doing construction by hand. Moving rocks and stuff. Digging that swimming pool by hand. They were even polishing the marble floors by hand. I couldn’t look at them. My own reactions startled me. I keep thinking of that beggar woman who clutched your arm this afternoon. If we had handed her money we would have been swamped by people.”

Rodney consoles me as he says, “Today on the street, I wanted to get out of there but became afraid that if we tried to move fast we’d have a riot on our hands. My claustrophobia nearly did me in.”

As we share our experiences, I realize I am more judgmental than Rodney. My struggle with the whole scene shocked me, the noise, the smells of exhaust, fear, dirt and strange foods, and the sight of so much poverty all scared me.

The next day Rodney joins several others to visit Mother Theresa’s Home for the Dying. Mother Theresa was not there, but other sisters led them through the rooms of sick and dying stretched out on pallets on the floor. I stay in the hotel resting and hiding from reality.

Later Brother Andrew, a partner with Mother Theresa in the work of the Home comes to the hotel and shares stories of the work they are doing.

“The population of Calcutta increases by 200,000 a year,” he tells us. “Many men leave their families in villages and pull carts in the city. Most sleep on the streets at night. They have no place to go when they get sick. Our brothers are constantly meeting emergency situations.”

The next day we fly to Banares (now Varanasi), the holiest city in India. We rise early to be present for the sunrise over the sacred river Ganges. The sunrise and air overflowing with spirituality and scented with incense transmits a sense of peace.

Bells clang as the sun breaks through. Throngs of pilgrims arrive early to bathe and meditate as the sun rises. A priest sitting on the bank blesses the pilgrims and they then go to a temple (every building has one) to worship.

As we look across the burning ghats, our guide explains, “Bodies of women brought to the burning ghats are wrapped in colored cloth, usually pink or red. Men’s bodies are in white. A family’s designated mourner brings the body on a wooden litter covered with garlands of flowers. They light wood stacked on top to burn the body. Three kinds of bodies are never burned: small children under five, holy men and persons dying from leprosy or small pox. They just throw their bodies into the Ganges.” We are mystified by the scene of so many people slowly moving down the steps toward the water.

The early morning boat ride on the Ganges takes us out of the crush of humanity and surrounds us with tranquility. I can feel Rodney relax as he says, “What a relief to move away from the acrid

smoke of the burning bodies. I expected the bodies at the burning ghats to repulse me but cremation in this manner didn't offend me."

Later as we wind through the ancient streets of old Varnasi, the sharp smells of urine and dung nearly overcome us. Beggars and sacred cows wander freely everywhere. Several of us are sick and scared as cars, cycles, cows, ox carts and pedestrians fill every inch of the winding alleyway. Drivers repeatedly honk as they speed past.

Later in the day we fly in a small plane from Banares to Agra.

Sitting in front of our hotel in Agra early the next morning I marvel at the flowers like we have at home: snap dragons, petunias, phlox, nasturtiums, larkspur and pansies. Nostalgia sweeps over us with our morning coffee.

We go by bus to the Taj Mahal. The sunlight glistens on the marble, but I am bewildered because I am having a hard time enjoying that beauty after the sights in Calcutta and Banares. Many tourists pointing cameras and chattering fill the space. I find it impossible to stop and let a sense of quiet enter my space. As we leave, I turn to Rodney, "I have a sense of having missed the Taj Mahal."

The bus ride to Delhi feels more like home resembling our mid-west fields of crops, pastures, and scattered trees. A herd of camels walking along the side of the road remind us where we are. The hot, bumpy ride leaves several in the group feeling ill, including Rodney.

New Delhi, a cleaner, more modern city than Calcutta beckons Rodney and I out on the street. Walking through cities anywhere is our favorite way of getting a sense of where we are. The

streets seem safer as we experience less traffic and more modern buildings. We watch a local barber with his shop set up under a tree on the sidewalk shave a gentleman with a pink towel wrapped around his head.

Later we go with the group to the Raj Ghat, a simple marble memorial to Mahatma Gandhi near the Yamuna River where he was cremated. The Memorial, beautifully graced with flowers on top sits in the center of a wide expanse of green lawn. Rodney voices what I am thinking, "I appreciate the energy wafting through me in the calm of the sacred."

The next morning we leave Delhi at 5:00 am with several in the group still feeling ill. Our schedule states we are to leave Delhi, sit down in Tehran, the capital of Iran for a few minutes and then have an hour lay over in Beirut. Plane times have been changed so we now have five hours in Beirut.

Someone manages a bus for a tour. We soak in the sight of the rippling blue green waters of the Mediterranean as we ride down the coast. We briefly visit the National Museum of Beirut, the principal museum of archaeology in Lebanon.

We arrive in Cairo to an excess of red tape that holds us up (feels like forever) in customs. Finally we arrive at our hotel grateful for a cup of bouillon to end our day.

We spend a typical tourist day in Cairo. The Middle East's brittle peace swirls through our minds when we see the glass cases in the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities taped to protect them in case of

bombing. Sand bags piled in some of the halls reinforce our shock.

Our bus takes us to Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt then north to the Giza Pyramids and Great Sphinx of Giza. We see evidence of military with men carrying guns everywhere and signs warning us where it is forbidden to take pictures.

Touchy and short-tempered attitudes abound. The Egyptian hawkers have annoyed us all day. Rodney says, "I wish we had known how to handle men who kept wanting to steer us to places we didn't want to go."

Our Hungarian Air flight to Rome with a change of planes in Athens demands a 1:00 a.m. wake up call. Arriving at the airport we discover that Hungarian Air cannot land in Athens; they have not paid their landing fees. Are we stuck in Cairo? The airline offers to divert us to Budapest. That raises a furious protest, "We can't go to a communist country."

Rodney and Sheldon go off to negotiate. They discover that Hungarian Airlines can land but can't depart because of that unpaid tax.

Finally the men return to the group and announce, "We are going to fly to Athens. The airlines can land us there but not legally take off with us. While the airline negotiates for us to be flown to Rome they will furnish a bus to tour the city for a half day."

In Athens, we are taken to the Acropolis. This healing time of refreshment comes as an unexpected bonus. Rodney and I find a couple of large flat rocks, sit and gaze at the Parthenon as Rodney says, "This is a spirit healer, I can hardly take in such beauty."

We finally arrive at our hotel in Rome. After hot baths we collapse for a great refreshing nap.

Then on to our next adventure, Rodney and I go for a long walk in the rain. On our return to the hotel we discover that all are ready to celebrate. Whether we want to celebrate re-entry into the land of familiar people or leaving the third world, who can say?

The group goes up a narrow back alley to a catacomb looking building. Heavenly smells of cheeses, tomatoes, and fresh baked breads assault us as we enter a captivating restaurant. After a feast of unprecedented spaghetti, salads and wine, our singing and dancing begins. The party turns into a joyous celebration as Martin dances on one of the tables.

The next morning, we enter the cavernous, arched interior of St. Peters as a shaft of sunlight streams down through the center. We stand in awed silence in front of Michelangelo's La Pietà's stunning beauty.

Rodney buys a small box of medals blessed by the Pope. Most of the people in his office are Catholic and he knows each will be thrilled to receive one of these medals.

The experience in St. Peters makes us pause, "Think about all that humans have created to indicate that we stand before the mystery of life. Just imagine Kyoto and all the shrines and temples. The Lord moves in strange ways...it is a miracle that both Kyoto and Rome were declared off-limits to the bombing of World War II."

After our tour of St. Peters, Rodney and I wander off alone again to enjoy the usual tourist sights. We pause by the Trevi Fountain and marvel at all the sculptured statuary spewing water into its

round basin. "This fountain draws such a crowd," I say. "The city has lots of fantastic fountains without such crowds. We should be standing in front of one of them." However, the ancient glory of Rome, even with the crowds of tourists fills us with awe.

A neighborhood corner restaurant catches our attention. We choose a small outdoor table for a delicious pizza lunch. Then back to St. Peters to climb to the top. Looking across the breathtaking view of St. Peters Square we marvel at the thousands of people who gather there to hear the Pope.

The flight north from Rome takes us to Paris where we spend a couple of days as typical tourists, then on to London. This concludes our Odyssey. We sing "It's a Small World" and "Lord of the Dance" on the bus going to London's Heathrow Airport as if to grab a few more minutes of togetherness.

Tired as we are, we suddenly are sitting up straight, laughing and smiling at each other with an undercurrent of, "This has been a great time and we've made it to the end."

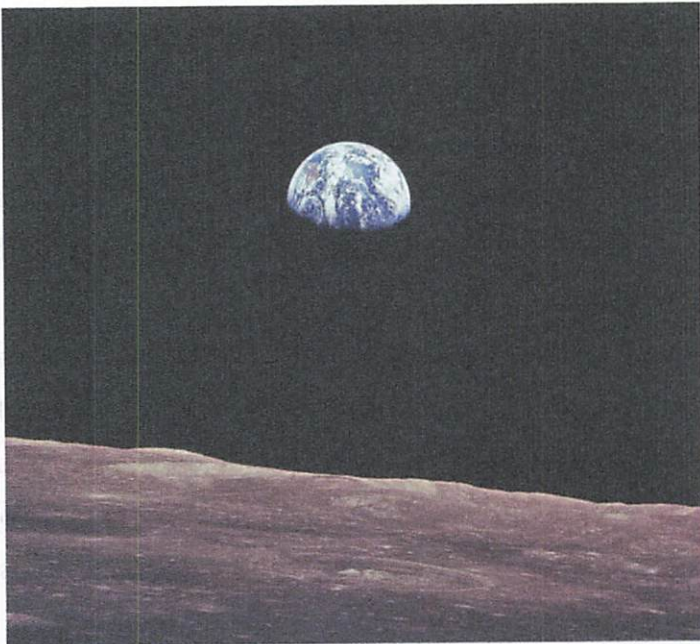
We began the trip with a question, "What can happen to a group of suburbanites when their minds are blown open to the whole globe in three weeks?"

Rodney and I left home rather arrogant. We assumed we were knowledgeable about the world. But our minds felt riddled after tasting poverty, chaos, and ancient beauty all at once. We've been through a time of intensive global education. We sense that our suburban minds have turned from just self-centered concerns to a broader empathy for those in need.

It takes years of living and looking back to be able to understand how we have changed. A new realization of the privilege we were born into peels away layers of indifference we didn't know we had.

The 1972 iconic photo of the earth from space anchors our sense that we are one with the whole earth ...not only our corner of the United States. Our imagination reaches out to the small blue marble floating in space; it becomes our home, our neighborhood.

In a strange way, Rodney and I discover we are living in a new marriage – broadening our world deepens our relationship. An unusual tranquility underscores our everyday lives and makes engagement in activities more meaningful. A magical quality of spirit circulates with the gift of our broadened world.



SOCIAL GUARDIAN

Guarding Values

A Radical Shift • • • Rethinking the Future 1973

“One cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life’s morning; for what was great in the morning will be of little importance in the evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening become a lie.”

— C.G. Jung

“Rodney Wilson had twenty minutes to live when he arrived at the hospital,” the doctor explains. It is spring 1973 and a massive hemorrhage struck him during his commuter ride home.

I hear the doctor’s pronouncement and my knees buckle. I collapse on a chair to let that thought swirl in my brain. When a nurse hands me the bag with Rodney’s bloody clothes my stomach heaves.

Rodney’s weakness keeps him in the hospital for three weeks as they pump blood and fluids into him. No affirmative diagnosis is ever made, perhaps an ulcer or maybe a sliver of glass. But this isolated incident in his forty-seventh year furnishes us with a strange interlude of time to ponder our lives.

After he recovers and my heart quits drumming in fear, he tells me, “I left the office quite early that day, I felt ill – thought it was the flu. I walked across downtown Chicago to the North Western Station and boarded a train, just as I have done hundreds of times. The next thing I know, I wake up in a pool of my own blood. The conductor on that commuter train saved my life. When he called 911, he asked for an ambulance to meet our train at the next stop. That time difference kept me alive. The ambulance rushed me to Evanston Hospital’s Emergency Room.”

As I picture Rodney spewing blood across the train aisle, I shudder and try to block that image from my brain. That red mess on him and the floor stays glued in my memory forever.

After he returns home, he shares his dreams with me. “That scare set me to thinking. What about no more postponing of important things? Let’s promise ourselves that we won’t wait until retirement to do all the things we want to do. I realize now that we might not be around by then.”

He often fills his daydreams with questions, “I keep wondering, how do I relate religion to the rest of my life? I don’t think I have to be a pious churchman. It seems to me that we’re being “church” whenever we can deal with innocent suffering. After that death scare, I don’t want to wait around until I’m old. What is my purpose now? It has something to do with service. I have to stay alert to possibilities. My new motto is, ‘Do it now.’”¹⁶

16 “Do It Now” is a short story in *Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia* by Kaze Gadway and Priscilla H Wilson

Opportunities of service appear unexpectedly during the next few years. “Yes” becomes our standard reply when these moments confront us.

He travels a lot during his years with the Santa Fe, so I know how to be home alone. Over the years, our lives involve many weeks apart with work or service projects. Sometimes we have the opportunity to work together on a project. Then an unexpected taste of paradise rewards us with the fun of that collaboration.

However, when apart we always check in with each other and report the ups and downs of whatever we are doing. We both know how to be independent. Yet often when one of us comes home from a project we both say, “Let’s aim to do the next project together”

Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry speaks to us both.

“I slept and dreamt that life was joy.

I awoke and saw that life was service.

I acted and behold, service was joy.”

Northeast Asia LENS Trek 1973

Seven months after our momentous decision to reply “yes,” Rodney and I leave Chicago to travel across northeast Asia. We had been part of a team developing the LENS seminars (Living Effectively in the New Society) and are elated to join ICA (Institute of Cultural Affairs, the secular arm of the Ecumenical Institute) staff members, Rick and Nancy Loudermilk, to teach it.

We stop first in Majuro, the capitol of the Marshall Islands, and what a surprise! From the air we view the long narrow semi-circle atoll floating in miles of blue-green, sparkling water.¹⁷ The first evening a crowd of twenty-five, both Marshallese and American, attends a reception for us at a local restaurant. The fragrant leis, presented to us when we landed fill the reception room with the sweet aroma of the South Pacific.



Occupied since 1855 by Germans, Japanese, and then the USA, the Marshallese developed strange dependency attitudes with each occupying force through the years in order to survive. The Chamber of Commerce sponsors the LENS seminar so they can learn methods of decision-making and solve some of the issues that currently confront them. The three-day seminar includes lectures and workshops on the local issues, trends and possibilities that currently confront them. We team teach by each of us giving

17 The Marshall Islands are Disappearing, *New York Times*, December 9, 2015. Climate Change.

different lectures and leading workshops on the political, economic and cultural realities of their particular lives.

While there, Rodney and I relish our first ever experience of snorkeling. We gasp at the elegance as we swim through an overabundance of colored fish and coral. As beginners, we snorkel in the lagoon instead of the ocean with its rough waters and sharp-edged coral.

Next we fly to Guam. As in the Marshall Islands, in each location we talk with people from both the business and university worlds to prepare for each seminar. Rick and Rodney visit several local businessmen as well as professors at the university.

One afternoon Rodney watches as I wade far out into the shallow blue-green waters of the Pacific Ocean near our hotel. I wave for him to join me. He motions for me to come back to the shore, as he laughingly signals “no.” Later he heads to a near-by store to buy me a gorgeous opal ring to celebrate our twenty-first wedding anniversary. He presents the ring with a hug, “Besides celebrating our anniversary, this is to remember this incredible team venture we are on.”

After the seminar we fly for a bumpy hour to Saipan with one of the seminar participants. The gentleman we accompany has arranged a meeting with a colleague. When we arrive we discover the anticipated appointment has been canceled because of illness.

Saipan, five miles wide by twelve miles long, is the largest and most populated of the fourteen islands making up an archipelago that stretches 400 miles.

Rodney's ship had stopped in Saipan in January 1945, six months after the main invasion by allied forces. So we rent a car and drive in sober silence as we contemplate the horrors of war. We had heard that more Americans died per square yard on Saipan in 1944 than anywhere else.

A rutty gravel road takes us to the top of suicide cliff on Marpi Point overlooking the ocean on the north end of the island. As the Japanese faced defeat in 1945, more than 8,000 civilians, men, women and children as well as soldiers climbed to this point and leapt to their deaths rather than surrender to the "savage" American soldiers. The honorable exit meant suicide. Of 30,000 Japanese soldiers on the island only 600 finally surrendered.

Silence settles over us as we conjure up a vision of what happened on that cliff twenty-nine years before. Now we stand hypnotized as a vast cloud of rainstorm approaches from the ocean with three rainbows dancing through it. We stand in utter calm, and peace as the approaching storm signals turmoil.

The next morning we drive to the ruins of the Japanese hospital and jail where theories state Amelia Earhart was imprisoned and died. Today we see no more than a scattered handful of assorted, damaged buildings. The Allies had demolished the town of 6,000 buildings including the hospital in 1944.

We fly next to Taiwan and instantly begin preparing for the seminar. In between appointments with a variety of businessmen, we take time to visit the National Palace Museum, a magnificent building of Palace architecture that holds much of China's ancient

and recent art. We can hardly believe that they change the exhibit every three months and it would take ten years to see everything.

Forty Chinese plus twenty businessmen of other nationalities make up the Taipei seminar the next day. We struggle to slow down our speech as many have limited English.

When we're ready to leave, Rodney takes charge of the large black boxy suitcase that carries all of the seminar materials. Basil Sharp, the local ICA leader says, "Leaving Taipei with overweight luggage can be a problem. Rodney, to help you move through the airport with that weight, why don't you wear one of my priest collars." Rodney hesitantly agrees and resembles a priest as we head for the airport.

We approach the ticket counter and hear angry shouting. A large, Caucasian man harasses the agent behind the counter. Gesturing wildly as he argues, he swings his foot backward. As his foot knocks the black bag over, he turns to see what he has hit. Spotting Rodney's priest collar he quickly bends over, pats the bag several times and sets it upright muttering, "Excuse me Father, excuse me, excuse me."

We leave Taiwan with no overweight charges and a story to laugh about forever.

During the Hong Kong seminar, Rodney faints while delivering his lecture on the global economy and changing vocational options. We call a recess as a colleague carries Rodney to our hotel room. One of our colleagues stays with Rodney, as we continue with the seminar. We ensure that someone is staying in the hotel

room to care for him. The image of his fainting forever haunts me.

A short, plump doctor, Dr Woo, comes to our hotel room. He sits by the bed, and talks at length with us. Finally, Dr. Woo, gestures up and down with his left hand, "Mr. Wilson, we come in here" Then his right hand makes the same gesture, "and we go out here. In between is so precious. What are you doing with that?" After a delightful chat about photography, wine, women, and song Dr. Woo concludes, "You are just exhausted. This trip probably came too soon after your bleeding episode on the train. Rest a few days and no more teaching for now."

What a puzzlement...how much or how little Rodney should do. He becomes terribly frustrated when he can't "pull his share of the load."

The last evening in Hong Kong we take the tram to the top of Victoria Peak. Dinner in the restaurant on top allows us a quiet time together to enjoy the lights of this captivating city.

Rodney asks, "Remember when we enjoyed this sight in 1970, not so long ago."

"We've lived a lot of life in that short time. We've learned so much more about how to live and work as a team."

We fly to Tokyo, and Rodney continues on to Chicago. In spite of his exhaustion, he needs to return to work as soon as he can. I want to go with him, but he insists I stay since we still have two courses in Tokyo and one in Seoul.

I call our friend Martin to explain the situation and ask him to meet Rodney. He assures me he will give him the care he needs.

Rodney celebrates Thanksgiving with friends at home and I celebrate in Seoul with colleagues. I miss him terribly and am glad when the last three seminars end and I can return home.

To paraphrase Dr. Woo's comments to Rodney,
we read Nikos Kazantzakis:

*"We come from the dark abyss, we end in a dark abyss,
and we call the luminous interval life."*

Oombulgurri 1975

George's phone call interrupts our quiet evening at home. Rodney turns down the television and answers, "Hello."

For a few minutes George chats about pipe tobacco and such stuff.

Finally he asks, "Incidentally, can you go with several of the ICA's staff to Oombulgurri for a village planning conference? It is an Aboriginal community just west of Darwin in northern Australia."

"When are you going?"

"Tomorrow afternoon at 5:00."

Rodney catches his breath and sputters, "Sure, I suppose so."

George said, "Just make sure you bring your snake boots. They have a highly poisonous snake, the king brown. If he bites, you need care immediately. The king brown's venom goes through you in about four minutes."

When Rodney tells me I gulp, hesitate, straighten my shoulders and say, "Why not."

Rodney packs his hiking boots hoping he can stay safe.

Later that night one of the Institute's staff comes to our house to pick up Rodney's passport to leave the next morning for San Francisco to obtain Rodney's visa.

Rodney goes to work the next morning with his suitcase and starts the day. Midmorning he walks into his boss's office, "I am thinking about taking a two or three week vacation; do you think that would be ok?"

"I think so. Where are you going?"

"Australia."

"Australia?"

"Yes."

"Priscilla will enjoy that."

"Priscilla is not going with me. I am going with a team to work with an Aboriginal village.

"When are you leaving?"

"About noon today."

Dumfounded he shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders, "OK."

Rodney meets the team in San Francisco and checks, "Am I going on?"

"Yep. Here's your passport with your visa in it."

They fly to Sydney and intend to fly north to Darwin.

They are told that Darwin was devastated early on Christmas morning 1974 when hit by the tropical weather depression that

was given the name Cyclone Tracy. Torrential rain fell and the winds were officially recorded at 217 kilometres per hour. All public services, communications, power, water and sewerage, were severed. And still by August, 1975 no commercial flights are going to Darwin.

Mike Chapman, one of the Australians going to Oombulgurri borrows money from his mother and rents a DC3 to fly the team to Darwin.

From Darwin the team flies on to Wyndham, the oldest, northernmost town in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. After a night in a small hotel on the outskirts of town they plan to fly to the village the next morning. As they lift into the air of this last flight they see an expanse of land stretching forever in all directions. Patches of green polka-dot scrubby vegetation are scattered across miles of dusky brown dirt.

From Wyndham to Oombulgurri is only sixty-five kilometers by air. The other possible route includes a twelve-hour boat trip up the Forrest River through crocodile infested mangrove swamps. This has to be timed with the fourteen-foot tide going up the river. With low tide the river turns into boggy mud near the village.

The group of skilled consultants, from both the United States and Australia includes a water specialist, construction expert, transportation, organizational expertise and three doctors, two of whom are women, plus Institute staff.

Marilyn Crocker, an ICA staff member from the United States later wrote: *“It is 1975 and the Human Development Project begins in Oombulgurri. A small plane makes repeated flights from Wyndham to the Aboriginal village, Oombulgurri transporting visiting consultants. I volunteer to wait for a later flight, as does Rodney and some others. Finally, the plane returns for the last load of two passengers. As we are boarding, up speeds an auto with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his wife, bumping the passengers from the plane...Rodney and me. The next day we travel up the Forrest River forty-miles on a rustic barge. Crocodiles swim along the sides looking for a meal. The fact that Rodney is there with his composed, practical, problem-solving style and ability to transform “tragedy” into opportunity for adventure calms me. When we arrive at the village dock, others are envious.”*



The consultants sleep in tents with pads on the ground. Meetings are held in a big tarp tent. When the sides are rolled up warm breezes swoosh through.

The first morning the flies keep landing in the breakfast oatmeal. Rodney suggests, “Just load the oatmeal down with raisins, so we can’t tell the difference between a fly and a raisin.” Later walking down a path with a doctor and hydrologist Rodney notices their backs covered with flies, going after the perspiration and salt.

During the planning sessions, the elders share Oombulgurri’s history. “Oombulgurri is in the Kimberly in the northwest of Australia. It is about 200 miles southwest of Darwin, about 40 miles northwest of Wyndam, across the gulf and up the river. People say we are isolated, but if you look on a map we are closer to Singapore than Sydney is. We like to point out that Sydney is isolated and we are right in the middle of things. In 1972, several of the Elders who had stayed with the community decided that the future lay with moving back to Oombulgurri from other lands, to reclaim this land that was theirs. Three old couples and a few youth that the parole officer in Wyndam had agreed to release on good behavior, founded the settlement of Oombulgurri. The population grew to about 30, then 50, then 100, and then 140, and finally to 200. Sixty-some families live in the village.¹⁸”

Many of the villagers participate in the planning. Other villagers share their thoughts as the consultants walk around the village talking with first one and then another. Rodney relishes conversations with the villagers as he seeks to understand how they live in such a remote location.

Water, one of the biggest issues, comes to the village from a

18 National Archives of Australia, Internet

well seven miles away. It travels through a single pipeline to one pump in the village. When something goes wrong at the pump, a runner runs the whole pipeline to find the leak. The thought of water traveling seven miles to the village through a single pipe with a solitary spout distresses Rodney. The quandary of water globally has exploded in his awareness.

One day, Mr. Roberts, one of the village elders interrupts the planning session hollering, "Get back, back." A king brown snake comes slithering out of a sleeping tent. One lad picks up a big rock, throws it, and hits the snake stunning it. Then Mr. Roberts flings an enormous rock and finishes it off. Rodney breathes a sigh of relief.

Another day a child hollers, "Snake, snake." The kids point to movement in the grass. The consultants see a snake slithering toward them and quickly move.

The consultants are told, "Always check under the toilet seat. Snakes curl around underneath the seat." The toilets are made of five-gallon oil drums with a hole cut in the top and a toilet seat on top. One American states, "I'm going to stay constipated all week."

For the village, the primary issue has been simply surviving with such an exploding population. As the planning progresses, concentrating on two key issues evolves: self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Self-sufficiency means, first of all, basic food production, providing the things that the community needs to eat. Self-reliance focuses on health and water.

Rodney works with the medical and health care team initiating some new health practices. He designs a new method of weighing

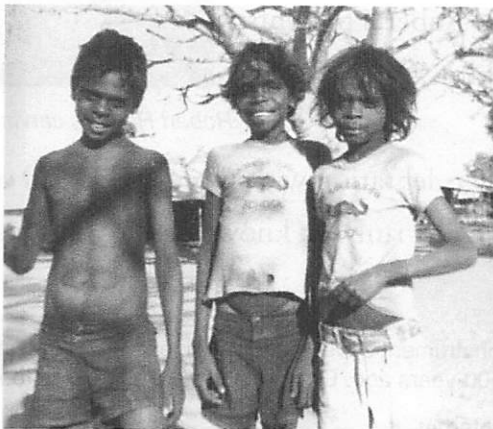
small children depending on size and age. For the little ones, he constructs a sling to hang on a scale.

One of the women doctors from Sydney struggles when she sees leprosy for the first time. She comes from a famous medical family; one of the big hospitals in Sydney is named after her father. Now she wrestles with poverty and leprosy. She can't handle being there.

The team leaders decide she needs to be sent home; she remains confused and unhappy. The men carry her to the boat during low tide and she jumps off into the muddy mush. They return her to the boat and as they turn to walk away, she jumps overboard again.

Finally, when the tide comes up they put her on board and manage to take her to Wyndham to send her home.

One evening the elders honor their visitors with a ceremonial gathering of indigenous song, music and dance. Clothed in traditional dress with the white chalk on their faces they perform their ancient dances.



The clapsticks begin, followed in rhythm by the digeridoos.¹⁹ The women dance first, moving in precise step, they shade their eyes with their hands and look down to the earth then together they look up to the sun to see how much time is left in the day. With a guttural sound and a flick of the arm, the dance finishes in exact beat with the “band.”

Then the men hop, jump, and wave a boomerang or spear. The dancers move towards the audience with their forceful body movements then with a jump in the air, the dance is over.²⁰ A collegial haze spreads across the area while the visitors sit in the open air around a roaring fire giving their full attention to the music and stories of the Dreamtime.

The Australians Rodney meets are all treasured ever after in his heart. He particularly prizes sitting in the dirt talking with Mr. Roberts as he carves a didgeridoo. Rodney is overwhelmed when Mr. Roberts presents the didgeridoo to him.



Robert Roberts carving the didgeridoo

After a closing celebration with more music and stories, the visitors head for the dirt runway, known as the Oombulgurri Inter-

19 Didgeridoo: a wind instrument developed by Indigenous Australians of northern Australia around 1500 years ago. Envisioned by the people as the voice of God.

20 Aboriginalartshop, internet

national Airport. Rodney sighs in relief when he hears, “Rodney, you get on this plane.”

The consultant team returns to Sydney for reflection and a celebration. Rodney has been gone from work so long that he says, “I can only stay three days to help with the report writing.”

Flying back to Chicago the plane lands in Honolulu and Rodney enters the customs line holding his didgeridoo. The customs officer, immaculate in a white suit, gingerly picks up the instrument and asks, “What is this made of?”

“A tree limb.”

“Could this thing have insects and termites?”

“Oh, yeah.”

In disgust, he pitches it down, exclaiming loudly, “Here, take it, take it.”

The rich Aboriginal cultural heritage in Oombulgurri opens Rodney’s eyes to a totally different world. He joined the team out of a sense of adventure, but discovered an appreciation of the local villagers that he didn’t expect. He witnessed local people analyzing their own situation.²¹ Discovering their dependence on the outside world perturbs him and he prays for more independence and respect for the Aboriginal people.

²¹ Infrastructure and welfare programs were set up in the 1970s and 1980s to provide the residents with basic amenities and to allow the town to become self-sufficient. Wikipedia

When Rodney comes home, we spend hours talking about his experience. "I discovered the possibility of talking with, listening to and planning for the future with people in the remotest corner of the world. The Aborigines expressed deep wisdom." He has discovered within himself a deep affinity for local villagers in need.

Oombulgurri alters Rodney. He never sees life quite the same after his time there.

His approach to problems shifts. "When we focus on problems, they grow like weeds. When we focus on solutions and possibility, energy rushes in. I am learning to shift my approach from, 'What is the problem?' to 'What needs to be done here?'"

Sudtonggan 1976

"Rodney, have you thought about coming to the Philippines?" Hale Prather asks Rodney this surprising question during the Institute's 1976 summer staff meeting in Chicago. "Nancy and I are the directors of the ICA's Human Development Project. We could sure use some of your exuberance and energy for a few weeks. Our family lives in the village of Sudtonggan, near Lapu-Lapu City. We are on Mactan, an island of sleepy fishing villages."

Rodney and I talk about this astonishing invitation. Finally we decide he should go because of his passion for villages and his sense of adventure.

In October, Rodney flies from Chicago to Manila. After a long and tiring flight across the Pacific Ocean he stops for several days!

to see his friend Don Quimby in Manila. Don's familiarity with the development work in Sudtonggan leads him to say, "Let's search for water pumps for the village while you are here. I know that they need one."

They don't find the water pump they need and Rodney continues his journey into Cebu City. To reach the village of Sudtonggan he takes a boat across to Mactan Island to Lapu-Lapu City and finally makes his way out to the village of Sudtonggan by bus.

During a planning session, the village men share the story of Lapu Lapu City with Rodney. "When Magellan landed on Mactan Island in 1521 his men were starving and sick with scurvy. Magellan's ship came into the harbor. Chief Lapu-Lapu sat on the beach and watched and waited for the tide to turn. When the tide went out the ship got stuck on the mud and Magellan couldn't move; Lapu-Lapu's men swarmed his ship and defeated him. A monument in Lapu-Lapu City shows this defeat on Magellan's cruise around the world. Lapu Lapu, the village chief who defeated Magellan, gave his name for the city."

The villagers had decided two top priorities: a water well and a better method for cutting limestone. During the village planning, the villagers said, "We only have rocks."

The village income flows from fishing and the men cutting limestone. Cutting the limestone by hand is slow, difficult and tedious work. As a group, they only cut two or three stones a day. Merchants come each day and pay them a pittance for the stones. They chop rocks into blocks that are used under house posts to

keep the poles from rotting. The stone can also be fashioned into corn grinders, mortars and pestles.



Rodney and a couple of village men take a block of the rock to the local Rotary Club in Cebu City. An architect slices the rock in his shop and finds it suitable as facade material for buildings and homes, and polished material for counter and tabletops. They are told that a stone industry will attract buyers who pay workers in advance to assure inventory.

Rodney spends time in Cebu City searching for a piece of chain similar to the one limestone cutters use in Indiana where they do the cutting on big circles like a band saw. His shoulders slump when he can't find a saw that works that way. However, he persuades the villagers to negotiate when they sell their stones. Instead of selling two or three stones each day, the villagers can hold their

stones until a pile accumulates and sell them at a higher price. The stone industry of Mactan Island begins.

Again Rodney faces a village with water problems. The single water pump in the village requires many short strokes to pump water. Each person has to make 1,000 pumps to get enough water to take a shower. Searching for another pump has proved futile, but Don has pledged to continue the search.

Rodney spends hours walking the streets of Lapu Lapu City going to one business after another looking for a saw to cut the stones and a water pump for a well. His disappointment grows after each rejection, and he talks to himself, saying, "It's hard to keep hearing, 'We don't have anything.' But I have to keep trying."



*Rodney, Village Elder,
Hale Prather*

The ICA staff's inadequate funds leave Rodney hungry most of the time. Even though he donates to their operating budget there never seems to be enough and rice is the main item at every meal.

He later tells me, "I often stopped to get a hamburger and beer while in Lapu-Lapu. I'm sure those hamburgers saved my life."

His weight, down to 124 pounds by the time he returns home, frightens me. I shake with dismay when I hug him and can feel every rib.

A bar and grill near Mactan Air Force Base provides food to the servicemen in that area who are being trained on survival in Vietnam. Filling up with a hamburger proves not to be the only gift of those stops.

One day he meets a young lady from Milwaukee who is serving in the Peace Corps. As they both enjoy a hamburger he spins stories about the needs of the Sudtonggan project. She listens for a while and then says, "We have supplies shipped to our project that we aren't using. I can provide big bags of powdered milk for all the kids in the village."

She also donates several sewing machines to the village women. The women are thrilled and sew green uniforms for all the school children in the village. The kid's giggles and laughter fill the air the day they show off their new clothes.

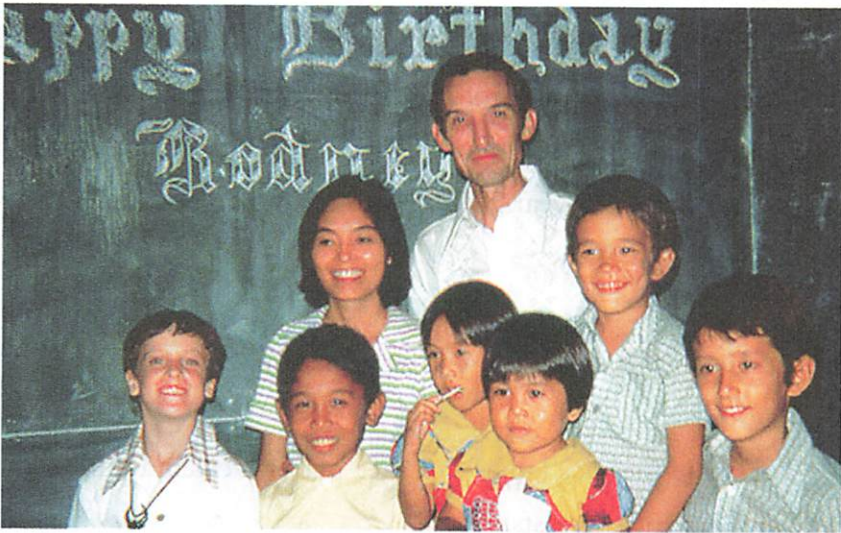
One of the plans includes establishing a fishing business. Some village youth go into the city to check out boats. They return and tell the village elders, "We found some boats about twenty feet long that will operate with outboard motors. But a boat costs about \$50."

“We don’t have any money to buy boats.”

“Priscilla will donate the money for a boat,” Rodney says.

Several of the youth go back into the city and try to get the best buy possible. When Rodney returns home, he laughs as he tells me, “The men in Sudtonggan appreciated the boat that you bought.”

Rodney observes his 50th birthday during his month in Sudtonggan. A dinner with staff and villagers celebrates his life and the children join in singing Happy Birthday.



When he returns home, he describes his stay in the Institute facility while in the village. “The staff lived in an old romantic-looking building. It has a square compound that opens to the center with bedrooms around the center. It is constructed of straw and has no electricity. A little kerosene lantern furnished light in the little room I had.”

Back home, Rodney leans back with his hands clutching his knees as he shares his stories with me. Bright spots in the village fill him with hope but despair often overwhelms him when he talks of the nitty gritty needs of the ICA staff, the villagers and their development project. Because of his lifetime of hands on practical experience, he sees clearly what more needs to be done.

Rodney's thinness when he returns home causes us both to wonder if the month was worth it. As I listen to his stories, I am convinced that his enlivening spirit and energy that he spreads across staff and villagers was the major gift to them.

Looking back, how did the efforts of the ICA with the village leadership enhance community? Over time, was it population growth and expansion that took over from Cebu. We have no way of knowing, but by the year 2000 Sudtonggan had become a thriving suburb of Cebu City.²²

A Three Dollar Tux for New Years Eve 1978

"Let's take the nice ladies to a nice place to celebrate New Year's Eve," Martin suggests.

Rodney and Don Moffett join Martin Pesek in a flurry of planning. Where to go, what time, invite any one else?

"Conversation flows better with just three couples. And this celebration won't be complete if we three men don't wear tuxes."

Rodney objects, "I don't own a tux."

22 According to the internet.

“Go buy one.” Martin says.

We don’t want to hurt Martin’s feelings, but we don’t see how we can spend money on clothes we don’t need. Don comes to the rescue with a brilliant suggestion, “I know where we can find a tux cheap.”

A couple of days later Don and Rodney drive to Clark Street on Chicago’s near north side. They enter a dirty looking second hand clothing store. Don explains, “This is where my son and his actor friends buy the clothes they need for their plays. All the theater guys and gals come here.”

As the men enter the store, musty, stale air accosts them. Don describes what they need and the owner takes them to a big box of jumbled clothing in the back of the store. Rodney shoves down a queasy feeling as he paws through the unbelievable mix of this and that. It is obviously all men’s clothing, but it’s hard to identify the pieces of clothing. Finally, he pulls up a wrinkled black wad... a tuxedo. Feeling slightly squeamish, he tries it on; it fits. “How much?” he asks.

“I can let you have that for \$3.00,” the storeowner says.

“Great. But I probably need a tux shirt also.”

“Here are the shirts.”

It takes a while, but the pile of shirts finally reveals a wadded up, dirty tux shirt. Rodney says, “This looks like it has been worn to at least ten weddings...you know those events where everyone enthusiastically enjoys the music and dancing. How much do you want for the shirt?”

“I can let you have it for \$15.00.”

Rodney, gulping at this high price says, “OK, I’ll take the tux, shirt and I need a cummerbund.”

Next stop, the cleaners.

New Year’s Eve arrives; the three men in their tuxes shine. Betty, Mary Warren and I, dressed in our finest party dresses enter Chicago’s Edgewater Beach Cafe on Lake Michigan like queens at a ball.

The building, deliciously pink, with cakelike adornments, was part of the Edgewater Beach Hotel, built in the 20’s and torn down in 1967. The apartment building was spared. The roaring twenties are still evident in the art deco lobby with high ceilings, chandelier and ornate woodwork. As we walk toward the café, the pink-striped wallpaper and mauve carpet make the hallway pop.

The maître de escorts us across the elegant room with its dark wood accents setting off the white tablecloths and soft lighting.

We relax in an atmosphere that recalls a time long past. Mary Warren asks the men to select the wine. I feel over-whelmed by the menu with its offering of French-inspired dishes.

Rodney and I both chose the escargots and roasted duck. As we enjoy our scrumptious food I share my grandmother’s admonition, which enhances every bite of dinner. “She said this every time we ate with her. ‘When you have something very good to eat, remember to eat as slowly as you can. You want that enjoyment to last a long time.’”

Rodney’s usual working uniform consists of khaki pants and a

navy blue blazer. They signal that he can go to any railroad division from the train operators to top management and fit in.

This night reflects a different style of honoring special friends and a special occasion. The gleam in his eye signals his pride as he relishes this tuxedo occasion.



LIFE EXEMPLAR

Currents of Change

An Unanticipated Move 1982

Continual change marches on in the 1980's. A gas crisis saturates the country with shortages and high prices. We worry about the environmental implications of our long commutes and move from Lake Forest to Evanston to cut twenty-five miles from Rodney's trip to the Loop and my drive to the ICA at Sheridan Road and Lawrence Avenue. Most weeks Rodney still travels the railroad as Santa Fe's Manager for Automotive Operations. He remains busy overseeing the rail equipment so automobiles reach their destinations in timely fashion.

For the first time in our married life, we aren't doing the construction work on our home. With a strange sense of relief, we hire an outside contractor to build a new kitchen in our Evanston home.

About the time the contractor finishes Rodney comes home and announces, "The Santa Fe is moving me to Kansas City." It is time for me to gulp a "yes" again as Rodney announces this move to Kansas City in 1982. We always assumed we were in the Chicago area for life. "The railroad is moving our whole Transportation

Department to Kansas City,” Rodney says, “We’re going to Kansas City.”

The kitchen will help the resale value, but it hurts to leave all that newness. The railroad sends three appraisers to check out our Evanston house. Because this is a move the railroad instigated, they purchase the house for the middle appraisal.

Daughter Mary and I travel to Kansas City to house hunt.

After looking at several houses a friend tells us about an unlisted house for sale on Tomahawk Road in Mission Hills. Our realtor sets up an appointment. A light snow sets the stage on Good Friday afternoon as our realtor takes us to see this house. Twelve red cardinals flitting around the back yard capture us. “I think this is the house,” I blurt out. “Oh, but we’d better look inside at the rooms.”

Rodney votes “yes” for the house, pleased to have a good commute route to his office in the Argentine area of Kansas City, Kansas. Mary and I return to Evanston and arrange for the movers.

Rodney continues to proclaim his identity as a “card-carrying Presbyterian.” This “I am a beloved child of God” reminder carries him through rough times when needed. We are thrilled to discover Village Presbyterian Church a mere four blocks away.

We find our niches in the church. I join the choir. Rodney soon becomes a Session member and joins a men’s study group. Ushering at the 8:00 a.m. service turns into one of his highlights. The natural friendly streak in his DNA works well and I am slowly learning that gift.

Walking in History 1983

Rodney's Santa Fe assignment to testify at an ICC hearing in Washington DC fascinates him.²³ The Defense Department rates on the railroads have been questioned. This falls under Rodney's responsibilities as manager for automotive and military movements.

This, his first trip to Washington, generates an urge to soak up as much history as possible. "I have to do some work Friday, but the hearings aren't until Monday. Why don't you share the weekend with me?"

Sounds like a great idea and when we check into the Radisson Mark Plaza Hotel I look around muttering, "This seems like the ultimate pampering atmosphere."

His work Friday afternoon in the Santa Fe offices includes checking records to prepare for his Monday testimony.

A swirl of touristy things fills my afternoon. I ride the Metro to the Botanic Garden then head for the rotunda of the Capitol, the National Gallery of Art, the National Cathedral, a walk around the White House, and a journey to the top of the Washington Monument.

Back at the hotel, my energy revives with a hot bath before joining Rodney for dinner.

23 The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) was a regulatory body in the United States created by the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887. The agency's original purpose was to regulate railroads (and later trucking) to ensure fair rates, to eliminate rate discrimination, and to regulate other aspects of common carriers, including interstate bus lines and telephone companies. The agency was abolished in 1995, and its remaining functions were transferred to the Surface Transportation Board.

He appoints me guide to walk through as much history as possible in the short time we have. After an early dinner we go to Arlington Cemetery for the 7:00 p.m. changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Watching the stylized ritual of the guards brings to mind the precision of the Japanese Tea Ceremony. We feel a sense of reverence as we walk through the rows and rows of markers on the graves.

Next we stroll across the Potomac River on the Arlington Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial. The soft glow of the lighted marble invites us into the Civil War era as we climb the steps in front of the President. Rodney gazes in awe at Lincoln's size and grandeur.

Saturday morning we return to Arlington Cemetery and locate the Kennedy grave. Rodney reads the last part of the inscription on the memorial stone:

“Ask not what your country can do for you
Ask what you can do for your country
My fellow citizens of the world – ask not
What America can do for you – but what together
We can do for the freedom of man.”

“That's the way we try to live, but I'm not sure we always succeed,” he says.

We walk to the north end of the cemetery to the Marine Memorial. The statue depicts the iconic scene on Iwo Jima honoring U.S. marines in World War II. Rodney laughs as he remembers talking with one of the guys he roomed with in college. His friend

watched the flag raising and told him, “A couple of Marines were sent up Mount Suribachi first to put up a small flag. No one got a decent picture. Then a group of five Marines took up a larger flag as a photographer captured the pose they wanted. They were all getting their asses shot off.”

Rodney reads the names printed around the base of the memorial of battles Marines have fought. He pauses at the names of the places he had been in World War II. Memories spill out as we talk about his experiences. He had been on Iwo Jima while the fighting still raged on Okinawa.

One memorable moment in Washington occurs during a long walk in the deep woods behind our hotel. As raindrops cascade slowly down through the large leaves above us we hear the pinging of each drop hitting one leaf after another as it descends toward the ground. We let our thoughts roam over our lives commenting, “We can take our life one drop at a time.”

Sunday morning we join friends, Lynda and John Cock to attend Holy Comforter Episcopal Church. John says, “Their congregation has been partnering with the ICA. It has been stirring to watch them grow from sixteen members to two hundred over the last couple of years. The Bishop expressed gratitude.”

A delicious lunch at Les Champs in the Watergate Building and conversation with Lynda and John help us understand more about this amazing city.

Rodney utters, “Strange to eat in Watergate. I don’t think of it as a real place, it just seems like a news item for me. But great to

hear all you have to share about this city.”

Rodney and I approach the National Cathedral that afternoon in hushed contemplation; we gaze at the cathedral’s style similar to France’s Notre Dame. Then we open the door to enter and hear magnificent organ music filling the cavernous space. We enter a pew and go down on our knees in hushed silence. After a short time of prayer, we leave quietly.

We decide to switch gears and drive to the National Zoo to see Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing the Giant Pandas given to the United States by the government of China. The minute we arrive I know we’d never get in as Rodney says, “There must be fifty or sixty people in line. It is late afternoon and I think we need to give up on this thought.”

During our time in Washington, Rodney says, “This city is probably the most powerful symbolic city in the world. I feel like my historical perspective has exploded. Even if we didn’t cover many parts of the city, this has been special. Thanks for coming with me.”

Rodney is up early Monday to shift his mind to his testimony before the ICC. I leave him to carry out his assignment for the railroad and return home tired, but grateful that we have spent this memorable time together,

A New Avenue of Service 1984

Our service pathway to the broader community continues to call us to work with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). We anticipate being able to continue to expand, explore, develop, and deepen our understanding of the needs of the world.

The ICA begins a three-year program called the International Exposition of Rural Development. Across the globe ICA colleagues bring together a variety of local development organizations to “share their approaches that work.” Fifty-five nations participate in local and regional symposia.

I interview projects across the mid-west to participate in a regional Symposium held in Des Moines.

In February 1984 representatives from 300 participating projects from across the globe gather in New Delhi, India to share their development approaches. The intent is for project delegates to learn from each other and reinforce methods that are working. Rodney and I fly to Delhi with several delegates and enjoy the excited anticipation filling the air. As in all our trips, we pay our own way. By now our children are grown and on their own.

The delegate teams put up large exhibits illustrating their development work. On the first day, Rodney and I walk around viewing the displays listening to the appreciative comments floating in the air, “Oh, look.” “Ah...they do it that way.” “We could try that.” One Iowa farmer rushes over to me excitedly exclaiming, “I just met a farmer from India who does organic farming like I do.”

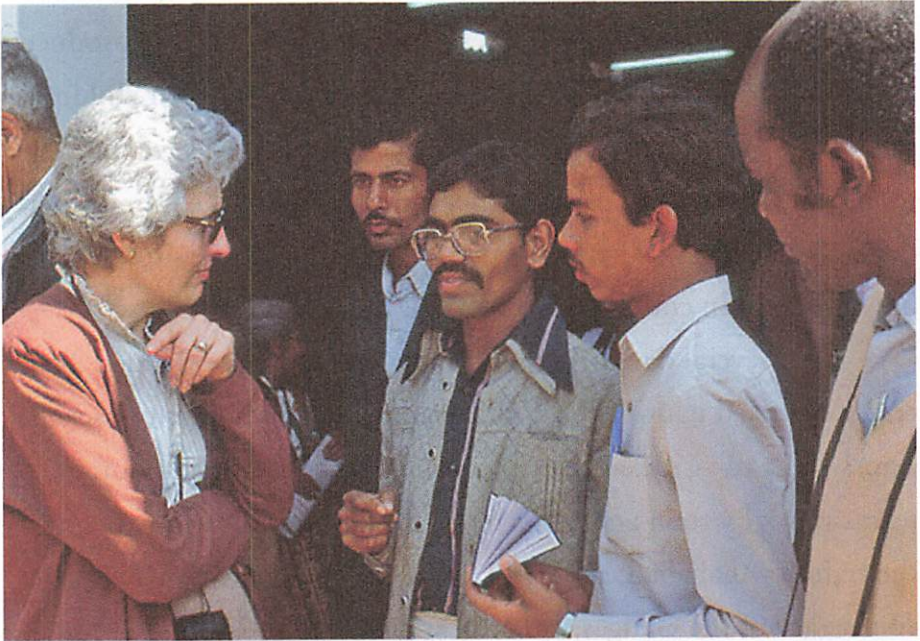
Rodney keeps his camera clicking to capture all the buzz for the documentation team. I interview women who have development projects in their communities. Three Kenyan village women told me their story of their women's coop to raise bees and produce honey. Their project was to make enough money for their children's schooling. The first time they had some shillings they gave the money to their husbands. But when the men spent the money they devised a new plan. They set up a cooperative banking situation so only the women could touch the money.

After several days of sharing, the participants are divided into teams of mixed nationalities. The teams travel to different projects across India to visit examples of sustainable development. Some teams travel by train and some by bus. Our team of twenty boards the train to Allahabad, a sacred Hindu city in North India, at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati Rivers. We come from Peru, Taiwan, Chile, Japan, India and the USA. For three-days we visit several local development projects.

Thousands of pilgrims have gathered in tent cities along the banks of these sacred rivers.²⁴ We stay away from the masses of pilgrims and visit the ancestral home of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. The dignity of the white columns across the front invites us to recall the journey of this great nation. We

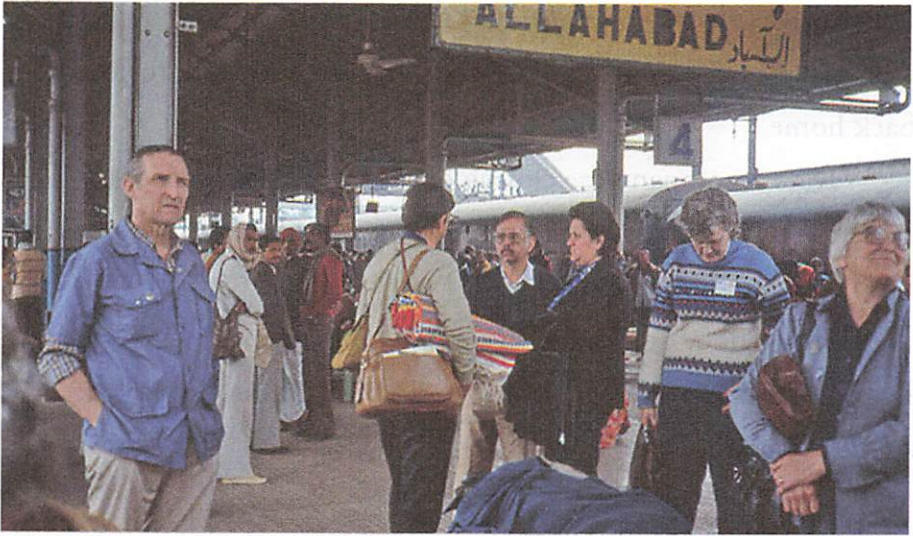
²⁴ During the month of Magh (mid-January to mid-February) pilgrims come to bathe at this holy confluence for the festival known as Kumbh Mela. There are two physical rivers Ganges and Yamuna plus the invisible or mythical Saraswati River. The site is Allahabad, Yamuna is deep but calm and greenish in colour, the Ganges is shallow, but forceful and clear. The Saraswati remains hidden, but the faithful believe that she makes her presence felt underwater.

gaze through the windows and imagine Nehru, Gandhi and colleagues sitting at the table plotting their road to freedom.



We visit several development organizations. A farmer's cooperative develops creative ways to share farm machinery and methods. Another, small manufacturing group was experimenting with solar panels to produce energy for their machines. Rodney likes asking questions about how things work.

Troubles arise when our team misses the return train to New Delhi. We stand around on the crowded train platform not knowing what to do.



Rodney leans against a pole. Travel dilemmas are his job. He ponders our situation and a simple solution occurs to him. He finds the Station Master's office. He introduces himself and presents his Santa Fe business card. "I am with the Santa Fe Railway in the United States." He says, "I have a team of twenty people who have missed the train back to New Delhi and need to return for a meeting. Can you help?"

We are ushered on board in first class seats on the next train to New Delhi. We are pleased to return to Delhi in time for the closing plenary. But Rodney states what we are all thinking, "I am somewhat embarrassed that local people were taken off the train and had to take a later train just because of us."

Once again, Rodney's quick thinking did the trick.

Back in Delhi, delegates share approaches in agriculture, health, education, animal husbandry, and family care. We feel

hopeful as we listen to report after report of projects serving local communities. Many are carefully noting what can work for them back home.

Tears accompany the closing of the IERD as new friends regretfully part for distant homes. We know as we part, we won't see most of these people again.

But Rodney and I plan to explore more of India while we are here. When the conference ends, we board the train toward the south of India.

An Unexpected Pivot 1984

We stare out the train windows at deserty looking rolling hills sprinkled with small clumps of vegetation. In bright cloth women hoeing in the fields resemble random patches of flowers.

We don't intend to cover tourist India. We want time together to reflect, relax and refresh after the intensity of the IERD.²⁵

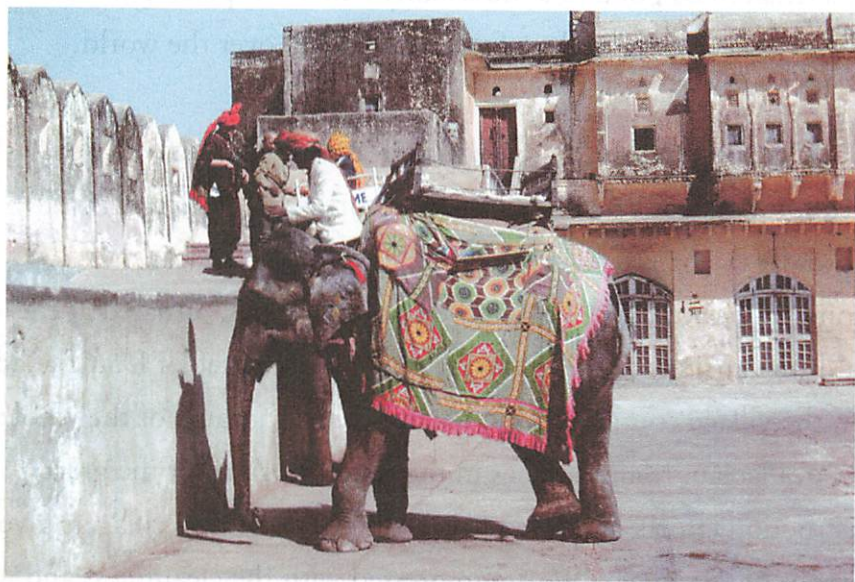
We are still young and adventurous so we plan to stop in Jaipur, Udaipur, Aurangabad and Bombay. We easily find local guides through the hotels in each location. A multitude of fascinating sights, sounds, smells and tastes assault us as we stop in each place. Two stops in particular strike us as moments out of a fairy tale.

Jaipur glows pink as our train approaches in the late afternoon. In the mid-1800s the city was painted pink as a sign of hospitality

25 The ICA's International Exposition of Rural Development event in Delhi.

when the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria visited. The surrounding hills shimmer pinkish as light reflects on the stones used for buildings through the ages.

Rodney and I bump and sway as our elephant lumbers up an ancient mountain range on a twisting street to the Nahargarh Fort. The elephant proudly sports a cloth of wild colors and geometric patterns. By chance we are all alone, no other tourists are around. We hold hands as we ride up the rough road on a funny platform seat savoring a moment of romantic glory.



The fort's many structures in the Aravalli Hills resemble a series of arched frosted cakes. We imagine the ancient history depicted in mosaic illustrations around the courtyard. The city vista far below resembles a magical mirage.

Continuing our train travel south, by the time we arrive in

Aurangabad we have two destinations in mind. We hire a taxi and ask the driver, “Can you take us to Maliwada village²⁶ but first to a place where we can purchase a brass water pot.”

“That isn’t a shop for tourists. You don’t want to go there.”

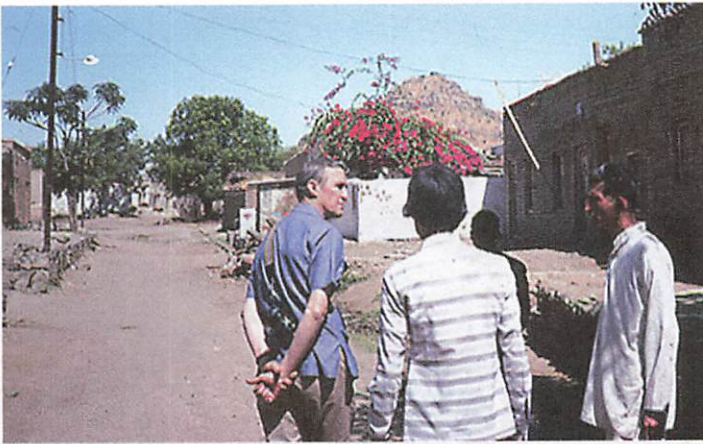
He doesn’t believe we are serious until Rodney says, “She really does want the kind of pot that the village women use to carry water.”

He takes us to a local “hardware” store protesting as we enter, “This is not where tourists buy things.” We choose a brass water pot, a small brass pot and a brass ladle. I envision placing it on a shelf at home as a reminder of women’s toil all over the world.

We convince him to drive us to the nearby village of Maliwada, located about fifteen kilometres northwest of Aurangabad. Maliwada, the first human development project in India, has become a symbol of the ICA’s development efforts. Situated at the foot of the ancient citadel Deogiri, the original name of Daulatabad Fort, the village commands the magnificent panorama of the whole Deccan Plateau. Maliwada lies in the shadow of one of the great construction efforts of human civilization. Two young villagers give us a tour of the village. We are impressed with the cleanliness and activities in the village but we decide the Fort is too far for us to go.

26 Maliwada village in Maharashtra State was the first ICA development project in India.





We journey on to Bombay (now Mumbai) and check into the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel to rest. Even with the mad traffic of cars, bicycles and rickshaws the vista of the sea and Gateway of Bombay in front of the hotel deepens our sense of peace.

Our friends, Nancy and Fred Lanphear live and work in Chikhale village, another ICA development project about thirty-three km. from Bombay.

We arrange for a taxi to take us to Chikhale Village.

The concierge explains to the driver where we want to go. We leave with the taxi driver, trusting he knows what he is doing. He speaks no English.

The brown-furrowed rice fields interspersed in the lush green countryside look rich and promising. But the occasional drab farmhouse speaks of the poverty of the area.

After we've driven more than thirty-three km, Rodney begins to fret. "Are you sure he knows where we want to go?"

“Trust the system,” I reply. Sure enough the dirt road we are traveling finally weaves past a pond and enters a village.

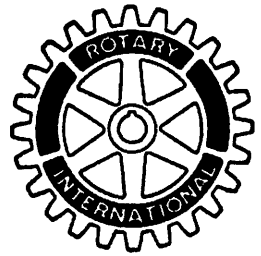
We see a collection of concrete-looking huts with thatch roofs connected by dusty, rough wide-paths. Three women walk by with round clay water jugs on their heads. Our taxi driver asks a couple of people and we finally locate Nancy and Fred.

Relief fills our hearts and dust swirls around our feet as we walk through the village with Fred. Stopping suddenly, Rodney stares at the hand-painted symbol tacked to a tree trunk which says, “Rotary International.” “What an incredible sign of service,” he whispers.

Fred explains, “The Rotary Club of Bombay has adopted Chikhale Village as their project.”

While admiring the symbol, an older gentleman, his face creased with years of labor comes over to talk with us. He proudly explains that a group of Bombay doctors performed sixty-three cataract operations in one weekend. After surgery, the patients were laid on mats under the trees for several hours of rest. Then by nightfall they all walked back to their own villages. He went on to say, “The Rotarians are also constructing a school with the villagers and building a cement ramp at the edge of the pond to make it easier for the women to do their laundry.”

He asks Rodney to take a four-generation picture of his family. He goes to his home and rejoins us with his son, grandson and great-grandson. They give Rodney a big hug after he takes pictures



of the family, their pleasure evident in their beaming smiles. We promise to send him copies.



We continue our walk through the village. A small elderly woman stops us. Fred says, “These are my friends, Priscilla and Rodney. They wanted to see the things we are all doing for Chikhale.” She then applies the ornamental red dot on our foreheads as a sign of our marriage.

I hug her in thanks thinking, “How tiny she is, I can feel her bones”



At the end of the day Fred and Nancy drive us back to Bombay. Our gift to them includes a couple of days rest in the luxury of a hotel room. This rest plus meals of delicious and savory foods renews their energy and our long-time friendship.

Rodney and I know this time together experiencing India's many dimensions has been a gift for us both. It is a treat to travel together.

When we return home, during my sister's dinner party, Rodney shares the story of seeing the Rotary sign as a sign of hope in the village. One of the dinner guests invites him to visit his Rotary Club.

Rodney joins the Kansas City Kansas Rotary Club in 1984.

Soon Rodney becomes a friend of Bill Mularkey, the Club President. Bill advances to District Governor and asks Rodney if he will serve as Rotary District Chairman of World Community Service. He explains, "There hasn't been any activity on the global level lately and some in the District don't think we need World Community Service, but I think we need more."

"I'd like to take on that task," Rodney says.

Rodney recognizes Rotary International as an avenue through which he can care for people in local communities. We neither one have any way of knowing that this decision has triggered a major turn. A surprise Rotary wheel nailed to a tree in a village in India has activated another radical shift in our lives.

Another Unforeseen Road 1985

One day while I am attending an ICA meeting in Chicago I hear someone comment, "I have been talking with Rotary International and wondering how we can connect Rotary with some of our village projects."

I suspect that these two paths will be connected through my family. Rodney will want to do more than attend a weekly Rotary meeting.

It is 1985 and our imaginations run wild when we learn that Club 13 in Kansas City will host the 76th Rotary International Convention. The tradition involves each Rotarian hosting one or two Rotarians one evening for "home hospitality." Rodney and I hatch a plan for broadening the concept of "home hospitality" beyond just one or two couples.

We send telexes (long before email or texting) to ICA offices in fifteen countries requesting names of Rotarians who plan to attend the Convention. Telexes return with forty names. Rodney writes hand-written invitations to each inviting them to our home for Home Hospitality Night. The invitations are waiting for them when they check into their hotels.

With two rented white vans we pick up the Rotarians who have responded, "yes." A catered buffet ensures a delightful May evening on our patio. Tulips, daffodils, and flowering crab waft refreshing fragrances across the crowd of thirty-six Rotarians and

their wives. Each of the men belong to Rotary Clubs which are involved with the ICA in their country.

I watch Rodney move among our guests in animated conversation. The stories swirling around the patio are rich with possibilities. His gift of camaraderie sends enjoyment and laughter across the patio, invigorating the evening.

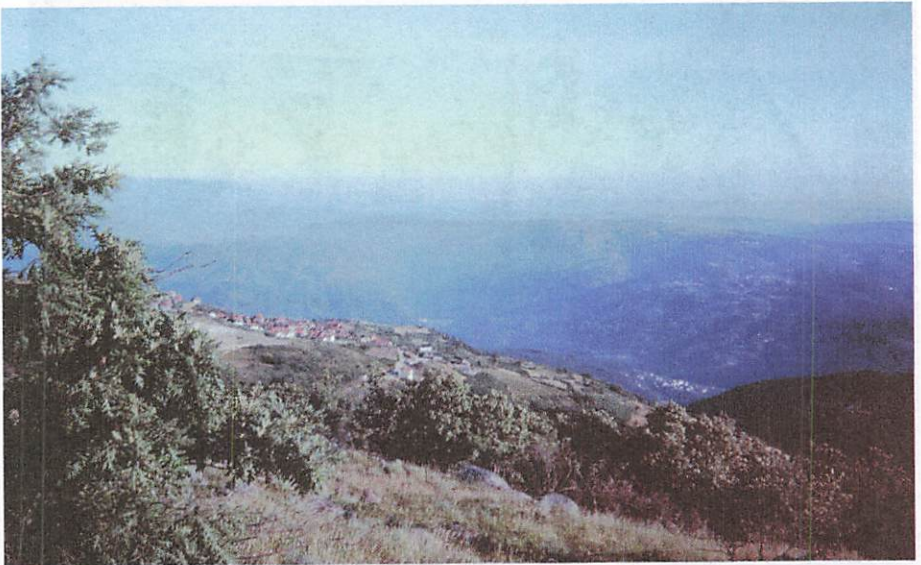
Several months later at an ICA meeting in Chicago, Rodney meets Len Farr, a Rotarian from Coos Bay, Oregon. Len begins scheming when he learns that Rodney will be in Bilbao, Spain, for the ICA's International Conference that summer (1986).



Attending the conference in Izzara, Spain.

Len contacts Roz Benford in Rotary International's office in Evanston. The ICA project in the north of Portugal and the Lamego Rotary Club had submitted a request for a 3H (Health, Hunger & Humanity) Grant. Roz is looking for places to send volunteers to serve in Rotary work camps. Len tells her, "Rodney can go to Portugal while in Spain. He can evaluate the Lamego Rotary Club's request for a 3H Grant."

In Bilbao, Rodney talks with Cathy Bayer, the ICA Project Director in Mezio, Portugal. He asks her to go with him to the project for a Rotary evaluation visit. Cathy agrees and the next day they zoom southwest across Spain to the Montemuro Mountains in northern Portugal for Rodney's evaluation visit.



Most of the men in the village are away from home working, so Cathy says, "You can't stay in any of their homes while the men

are gone. It is best if you sleep in the home of our local priest's mother."

Rodney makes evaluation visits for the next three days carrying Rotary's checklist of things to look for and advise for or against. He meets with Lamego Rotarians, villagers and ICA staff. Everyone is enthusiastic about working together.

Every thirty minutes, day and night, the bells in the church next-door to the priest mother's house sang out. Rodney decides the bells are calling him to pay attention to the people in the village. He can't sleep a wink with those bells ringing.

He talks with several villagers as well as the Lamego Rotarians. Several of the villagers mention the network of villages across the mountains. They hope that several villages can be involved.

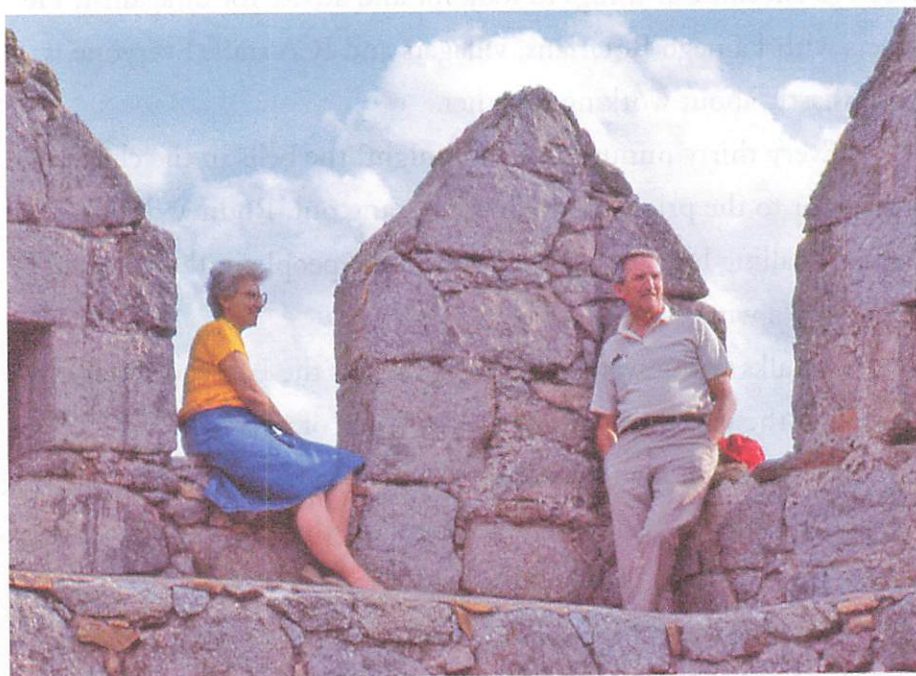
Rodney and Cathy return to Spain for the closing of the conference.

As Rodney and I drive the rented car south to Madrid to visit our friend Kaze Gadway, he shares his Portugal experiences with me. We pick up Kaze in Madrid.

The next day we travel about an hour and a half by train to Avila to see where St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross walked. We check into a hotel within the walled city and prepare ourselves to be immersed in the lives of these two saints.

The sun rises and brings to life the ancient stone towers with the ringing bells. We start the morning with a time of solitary meditation on the stone wall. The red tile roofs and semicircular towers every few feet in the wall swirl us back to the 12th century. We walk

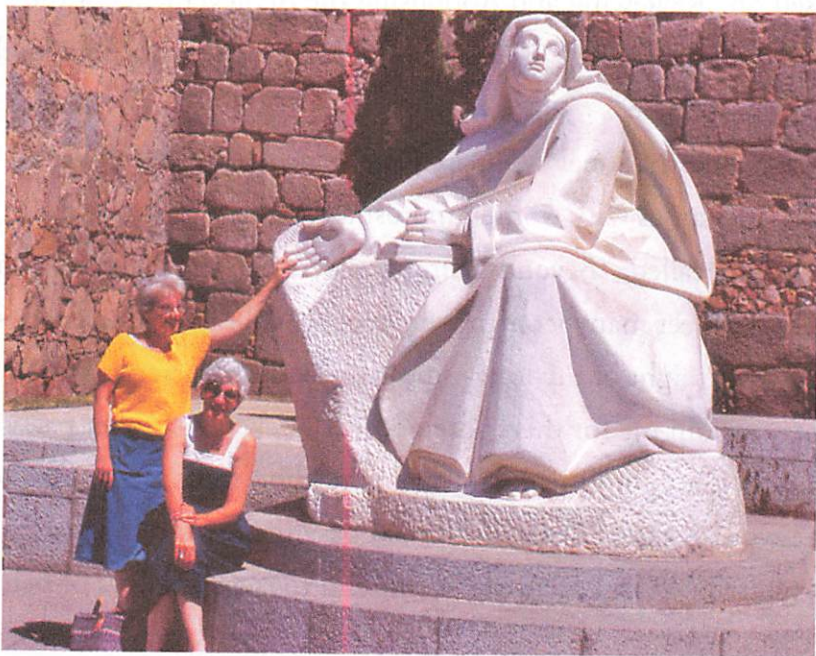
a portion of the wall with a sense of awe as we look down on the medieval city. As we contemplate the vista before us we wonder how many churches are scattered across the town inside the walls.



We walk the narrow cobblestone streets surrounded by the impressive medieval walls. The Convent of St. Teresa fills us with reverence and wonder as we stare into the saint's tiny cell and encounter her presence. We stand in the room where St. Teresa and St. John are said to have unconsciously levitated while talking about God. We peek into the room where St. Teresa slept with a piece of wood for a pillow. We marvel at the practical care that St. Teresa took as she traveled across Spain to create a new religious order for her 'shoeless' nuns.

We stop at the convent shop and buy a bookmark that has St. Teresa's famous prayer on it. We read and reread Teresa's prayer; it touches each of us deep in our heart. For the rest of his life Rodney carries a copy of Teresa's prayer in his wallet:

“Let nothing disturb you
Let nothing frighten you
All things pass away:
God never changes,
Patience obtains all things.
He who has God finds he lacks nothing
God alone suffices.”²⁷



27 "Walking the Sacred," our time in Avila is written in *Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia* by Kaze Gadway

This visit with St. Teresa serves as the prelude to the next chapter in Rodney's life of service. He engages in fifteen glorious years of coordinating Rotary Work Projects in Portugal, Jamaica, Mexico, and Ghana.

Celebrating Women 1985

Although I've been involved in women's rights for years, the International Women's Movement really comes to life in 1985. The United Nations International Women's Conference in Nairobi becomes known as "the birth of global feminism." The Conference focused on "Reviewing and Appraising the Achievements of the United Nations Decade (1976-1985) for Women: Equality, Development and Peace."

This International Women's Conference in Nairobi inspires a group of Kansas City women to host a conference for women in Kansas City called, "Beyond Nairobi." I serve on the planning committee and meet many women who become colleagues and friends.

I invite eight of my long-time girlfriends from across the country to join me for this conference. A weekend slumber party at our house is accomplished with makeshift housing of rented beds. Three women sleep in our unfinished basement. Comfort doesn't rank high as our first concern. We intend to share the joys of being together.

For our personal slumber party, Rodney pitches in to help

ensure all goes well. He helps orchestrate meals, housing and transportation. My friends arrive bubbling with excitement to participate in sisterhood on a local and global level.

After a stirring speech by Maureen Reagan,²⁸ we move into breakout groups and share insights into women's roles toward personal, social and global justice and peace. Issues examined include:

- 1) Women's Literacy, millions of the world's women can neither read nor write.
- 2) Women in Development, the role that women play as a country becomes more modern.
- 3) Domestic Violence against women and children.
- 4) The Plight of Refugee Women and Children.

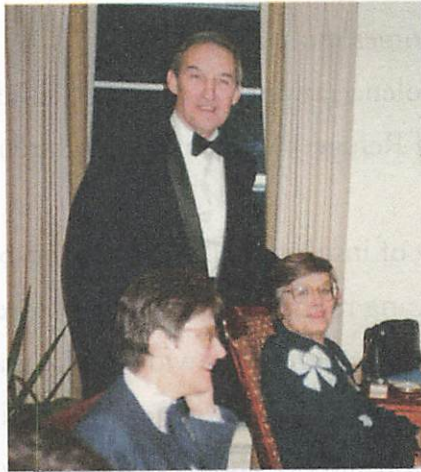
After a long day of inspirational speeches and breakout groups our "slumber party" gang returns home. Rodney meets us at the door resplendent in his tux. Our eyes widen as he graciously greets each one of us. We flop down on the couch and chairs in front of the roaring fireplace and slip our shoes off to reflect on the happenings of the day. We participated in different breakout groups and now eagerly share the plethora of information we gleaned. We realize how lucky we are with our easy lives.

Then stunned silence fills the room as Rodney returns with a towel over his arm and a tray of wine glasses in his hands. He circles the room serving each woman with his most respectful bow.

²⁸ Maureen Reagan, President Reagan's daughter is the Keynote speaker for the conference

Rodney's style captures many a heart. His gift of being humorous, gracious, giving and satirical all at the same time spins silver threads across the room as he says, "How opportune that women around the world have had your attention. We are all so privileged to have served and worked with women both in this country and across the globe."

I was so proud to have Rodney as my husband. My eyes filled with tears as he served each of us.



Setting Sail on Twenty-five Years of Retirement 1986

In August 1986 the Santa Fe offers Rodney a retirement packet. They hope the higher paying jobs will be replaced by newer people who don't cost as much.

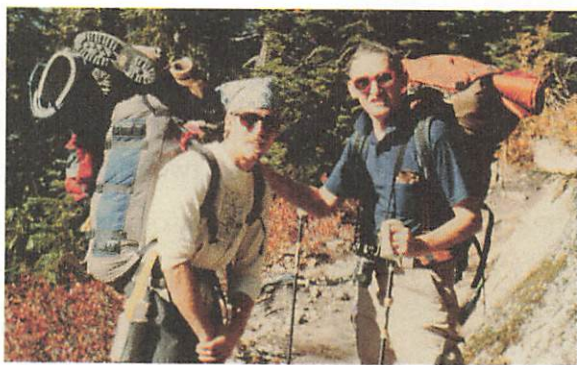
This requires some heavy thinking on our part. We schedule a weekend in The Elms in Excelsior Springs Missouri, a majestic old native limestone hotel with historic tales of political, gangster and

celebrity visitors. We alternate between swimming, sunning and studying our pile of cost-of-living figures.

We sail through some “Walter Mitty” games...thinking about dreams, hopes and aspirations. “Can we make it okay on this pension? What does it really cost us to live?” “What do we need for housing, food, family events, and leisure time? What do we want to do in retirement?”

It is an amazing time—swim, plan, swim. We are fortunate to be debt free and the retirement packet looks good. He decides to accept it.

On October 4, 1986 the termination letter finally arrives. Rodney, Ben and Tim are climbing a mountain in the Cascade Mountains in Washington State celebrating Rodney’s sixtieth birthday. Their climb absorbs all of Rodney’s attention and he reports when he returns home, “We pitched our tents on a small ledge up somewhere on the mountain. I felt terrified until I looked over at Tim and he is happily snoring away. My last thought before I fall asleep is, if he isn’t worried I guess I don’t need to be.”



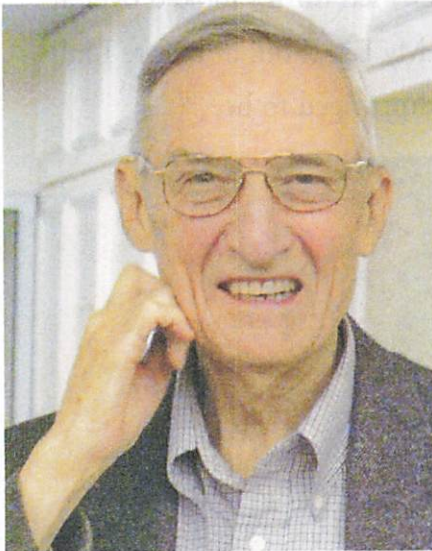
#51, R on mountain with Tim

On his return home we read the fateful words together: “Termination: December 1, 1986.”

We both confess our anxiety at the thought of retirement. After a long walk and much talk about the need for working together we reach a new plateau of peace. Creating a new office for Rodney first makes sense. Building the new rhythms of time will need as much creativity as we can muster. We let our minds roam toward the approaching retirement and decide we can make it one drop at a time.

The first weekend of retirement arrives. We drive our RV to Arkansas City. On the way we camp in a National Forest in southern Missouri’s Ozarks. After dinner in the woods I throw a not so fresh cabbage out on the ground so an animal can eat it. We both giggle as we observe an albino possum ingesting the cabbage. That

sight remains with us for years, the ghost-like creature that ate our offering.



Rodney’s retirement turns out to be the first time in the twentieth century that a member of his family has not been employed with the Santa Fe Railway. Too often for folks a sense of a final frontier defines

retirement, a time to stop work and take it easy. Rodney finds a new vocation. He identifies ways to do what he has been doing all his life, connecting those without resources to the larger community.

A friend in charge of Santa Fe retirement plans asks Rodney to speak to a pre-retirement group. His sense of humor and laid-back attitude eases some of the tension for those facing retirement. He makes a hit explaining how he has shaped his time. Sometimes he makes decisions slowly. But if it applies to one of his values, like helping a team member shine, his response becomes instant.

As a couple we create a new partnership in our marriage. We both sense the need to redraw our map. One key in further developing our relationship lies in the gift of saying to each other after a disagreement, “I love you anyway.”

Once again we have a new marriage as we recognize “he has his things, I have my things and we have our things.”

Portugal Village Project 1987

It is a “first.” The Lamego Rotary Club’s approved 3H Grant includes an item for a volunteer Rotarian work camp. No international team of Rotary Volunteers has ever worked on a development project in Portugal.

Rodney studies the Grant proposal, and works with the Rotary International office to put together a volunteer team.

Rodney and I arrive before the team and meet with Lamego

Rotary representatives. They are delighted to see Rodney again. He impresses them with his air of assurance as he lays out the prep journey for this work camp. He undergirds their sense of confidence with his humor, care, intentionality, and spirit.

The Montemuro Mountains display rocky, jagged heights overlooking hazy valleys. Bright yellow broom and purple heather bring the mountains alive. The stone villages with their clusters of red tiled roofs nestle into the side of the mountains. It is 1987 but the villages seem centuries old.

Twenty-one Rotarians plus their wives arrive from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Scotland and the USA. We welcome them as they settle in at the Hotel São Paulo located in the heart of Lamego. We will commute about twenty miles south to the village each morning.

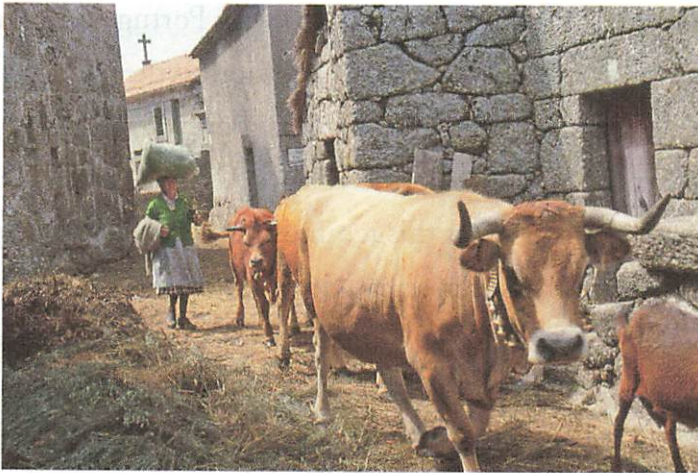
The get acquainted party the first evening serves as a team building time as we hear that Al Divenies grandfather founded Rotary in Lithuania, Gene Estes is a Past District Governor from Canada and the Christension's are celebrating their second wedding anniversary.

As our team arrives in Mezio village the next morning, we see a woman by the pond pounding clothes against a rock and a man herding pigs with a stick into a stone enclosure.

A 500-year-old stone building houses the project coordinators, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). Americans, Portuguese, Indians and Brazilians serve on the staff. The ICA has been active in Portugal for five years, training strong local leadership to improve

the quality of life and help people help themselves.

Farmers raise animals and vegetables much the way their ancestors did a thousand years ago. Young children drive small herds of goats and sheep. The ox-drawn carts are picturesque, but hard work for the villagers. As Rodney walks the roads, he dodges the reddish-brown oxen with their heavy padded yokes pulling carts full of Scotch broom. The constant jingle of bells on the leather straps around the oxen necks resound with the ever-present church bells.



The rigors of rural living stun the Rotarians, one Rotarian murmurs, “Culture shock, city man.” Most villagers over forty did not have an opportunity to learn how to read and write. Yet the hospitality of the villagers and the vivacity of the ICA team cast a spell on us all.

We soon realize that the village women never experience an idle moment. Two of the women talk with us in the street; one

continues to knit and the other to crochet as we share stories.

As team coordinator, Rodney struggles to keep everyone happily and practically busy. All are anxious to get to work but it remains difficult to proceed, find the right tools, and get material to each team. He sometimes loses patience as he tears up innumerable plans to keep up with fluid situations. Many evenings, he and I sit on one of Lamego's park benches, pondering and planning how to ensure that all are most effectively engaged.

The work team takes one day off from work to participate in a Rotary meeting. They meet in Lamego with Portugese Rotarians from six Districts and seven clubs, in addition to the Village and Country government representatives. The group authorizes the ICA-Rotary collaboration with the villages. One of the Rotarians from Guimaraes Village says this reminds him of a Portugese poet, "When man begins to dream, creativity is born."

Capturing water as it comes out of the springs in the mountains presents a major challenge. As it flows down the hill, each farmer blocks off the water he needs to care for his crops. Then after his crops are watered, he moves a little dam of sod and lets it go down to the next farm. One farm after another catches water as it flows down. Too much water is lost into the ground. The higher the crops are, the more water the farmer gets. For hundreds of years this has been the process.

Mezio village has a little grassy hole, but the water quickly sinks into the ground. Building a water containment tank becomes

a top priority as the team learns about the situation.

Beginning with the existing shallow water hole that holds 7,570 litres (2,000 gallons) of water, the construction team and a dozen villagers go to work. They dig, clear, and level dirt. They hand-mix concrete for reinforced walls. They haul and sweat until they have created a water reservoir that holds 60,560 litres (16,000 gallons), like a big country club swimming pool back in the states. A sliding gate contains the water, releasing it for field irrigation as needed.

Several of the Portuguese Rotarians from Lamego come to Mezio and are shocked to find Rodney digging and doing manual labor with the villagers.



The construction team declares they have built the world's most impenetrable water-catchment tank in the village of Mezio.



Later Rodney shares the project work with the broader community via a local radio broadcast with Cathy Bayer, the ICA Director. He had carefully written out his speech:

“Probably the most important thing for our team was getting to know the many villagers, Lamego Rotarians, ICA staff and others with whom we worked. The Lamego Rotarians are gracious and friendly in the course of Rotary meetings, tours and support for our task. The ICA staff is continually attentive to project needs. Nineteen Portuguese and three non-Portuguese provide full-time translation, transportation, coordination and meals and participate on our work teams.

The four teams produced many achievements. The construction team, with three veteran engineers, built an impenetrable water-catchment tank in the village of Mezio. The team went to Relva to finish a

water system previously started by a Belgian work camp.

The team also designed a program for remodeling the water system of the village of Po'voa. And it drafted plans for renovating the Social-Cultural Center and other offices in Mezio.

The project women's advancement team worked with a women's knitting cooperative in the village of Relva. Four years ago, team member Len Farr, the Rotary Club of Coos Bay, Oregon and his wife Joyce toured northern Portugal. During a visit to Montemuro, they noted the ancient mode of spinning wool into yarn still being practiced. Prior to our group's arrival, the Farris ordered a portable wooden spinning wheel from a manufacturer in the Netherlands. It arrived in Lamego the first week of the work camp, and two women from Relva are now trained in its use. The villagers are surprised that our group of international women thought of the women of Relva before they came to Portugal. The women's advancement team also taught three levels of intensive English classes to village young people.

The medical/dental team examined and treated more than 800 people. They also combed the area's hills and valleys visiting twenty villages and numerous schools to teach techniques of brushing teeth and bandaging varicose veins. Overall, they examined some 300 children, focusing on preventive dentistry.

The veterinary team encountered centuries-old ways of caring for animals. The team gave evening agricultural seminars, out of which evolved a training course aimed at transforming subsistence farming to a market economy."

To celebrate the month of service, the ICA house in Mezio hosts an international feast. The Missouri Rotarian constructs an authentic barbeque pit. The local villagers are scandalized by the application of a red sauce on good meat. An Indian colleague creates a marvelous salad. Another volunteer spends two days making a Danish orange dessert. The Brazilian staff, fixes farofa, a toasted cassava flour mixture with raisins, nuts and finely chopped apples.

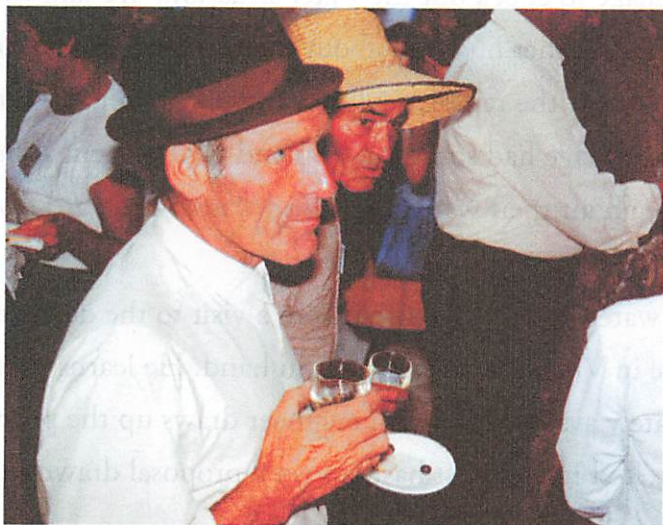
Rotarians, villagers and ICA staff share an extraordinary time of collegiality and friendship.

All of the Mezio construction crew and their wives come, dressed in their Sunday church clothes. They pronounce the mysterious meat a success. Just as someone pours Portuguese port the music reaches a crescendo. We share a memorable evening of feasting, sharing stories and laughter exhilarates all, from ages two to seventy-five years.



Expressed sentiments hold the moment for all, “We’ve discovered a wonderful friendship with you.” “We’ve experienced the gift of Portugal and the Montemuro.” “We are working together for a common cause.” “We will diminish the differences between our countries, Rotary is about service and we are all brothers.”

Diamantino, a fifty-six-year-old farmer from Mezio, symbolizes the success of the project. As foreman of the water-reservoir team, he embodies gentleness, dignity, and hardworking care of the Montemuro people. His name means, “diamond,” and he is a true reflection of the resilience and perseverance essential to achieving international goodwill through service.



Diamantino

Two years later, Rotary and Rodney organize a second work camp in the Montemuro Mountains. There is a sense of going home when we greet the villagers and Portuguese Rotarians again.

During that session, several men on the international team help expand the pre-school portion of the school building, level a play yard for the children, design and build playground equipment out of easily available materials.

Rex²⁹, an artist from Scotland creates a bright mural for the wall of the pre-school, and teaches basic drawing skills to local members of the ICA staff. Art is not offered in the Portugal schools.

The two civil engineers talk with local officials about water catchment possibilities in other villages. I drive one of the engineers to Povoia village to check out the water situation. We talk with the schoolteacher and her husband about the water needs and understand again about the remoteness and difficulties in these mountain villages. The village had someone stop and talk to them about six years before about their water needs and was never heard from again.

This water trip to Povoia results in a visit to the department of Agriculture in Viseu with areal maps in hand. He learns that money is immediately available if a civil engineer draws up the proposal for the project. Ted moves post haste to get a proposal drawn up before we leave.

Rodney's comment, "The key to this kind of team besides all

²⁹ Rex Cook from Scotland and Rodney become good friends and visit each others homes in Kansas and Scotland several times during their remaining years.

the coordination is the actual expertise and experience of the team members. These civil engineers are worth their weight in gold.” Rodney has a way of including each team member in the importance of the task.

Rodney’s two overwhelming skills are connection with people and practical usefulness. As I work with him in the task of inventing what it takes in a situation, I continually learn new levels of care for local people. Because he never has to be “someone,” he demonstrates a profound love for the local people.

Our work strengthens our marriage as we establish bonds with so many people from so many places.



The coordinating team: Len Farr, Hiranman Gavai, Cathy Bayer, Joyce Farr and Rodney Wilson



Rodney isn't surprised when projects and work teams don't always go smoothly. In such moments, he often collapses on the nearest chair, rubs his neck and wonders, "What next?" We wander down that unknown path and work together on the necessary planning and finesse.

He never makes decisions out of status. One of his rules when operating at the Santa Fe, "Make heroes of my team" works well in village projects. He does not care about credit; he wants a job done well and the people doing it to be proud of their work.

This philosophy works. Word spreads across Rotary District 5710 that international service is a possibility.

A Crisp Retirement Christmas 1988

The Charlie Brown Christmas tree stands alone in the lot next to the gas station. The grizzled old man managing the lot sighs in relief as we pay for his last tree. He heads for the bar to get out of

the eight above zero cold to celebrate Christmas Eve.

Christmas, 1988, a couple of rustic cabins off of Highway 61 south of Grand Marais Minnesota provide cozy shelter for six of us. Ben his wife, Tina, and boys, Marcel, ten, and Jeff, seven, had dreamed of a magical Christmas up north for several years. This harbor town on Lake Superior sits on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Superior National Forest. Always open for adventure, we tag along to share in the dream. Daughter, Mary, and her two children weren't about to go north to that much cold even to join us for Christmas.

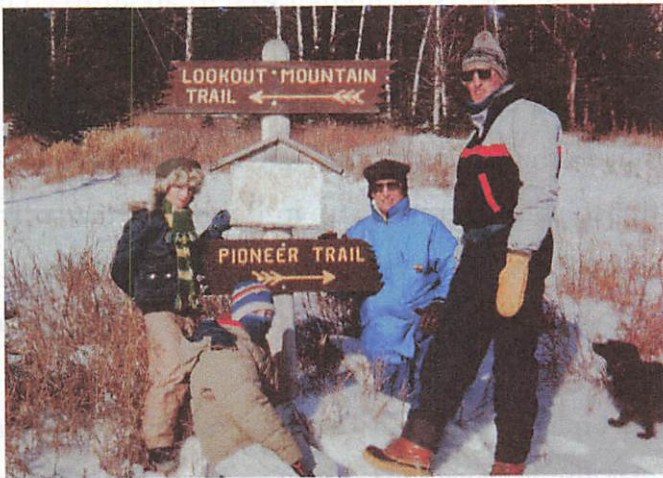
A pile of paper chains, stars and decorative balls obscure the table. Tina shares the secrets of making Christmas decorations she learned with her siblings growing up in Berlin, Germany. Transforming a spindly tree into a joy to behold without a Walmart or Target in sight challenges us. We all discover the delight of a do-it-yourself Christmas.

Cascade Lodge offered us two rented cabins. The one room cabin provides ample space for Rodney and me. The other cabin with its spacious two rooms becomes the gathering place for all the festivities.

Wrapped Christmas presents are minimal. The crisp air and sparkling snow bestow presents beyond compare. Christmas morning dawns crisp, cold and luminous. Tina fixes the turkey while the rest of us tackle the snow on the hill with our sleds. She glances out the kitchen window in fright as four of us pile on one sled and descend a narrow path between the trees.

After stuffing ourselves with turkey and all the traditional Christmas goodies, we hurry through the cleanup for more hiking through the snow.

The trails keep beckoning us. We are frolicking on the edge of the Sawtooth Mountain Range with Minnesota's highest peak, Lookout Mountain at 1841 feet nearby. With the view of Lake Superior to the east and forested hills behind the cabins, every place we look presents us with a Christmas gift from God.



The next year, 1989, a colleague, Joel Wright, and I start a strategic facilitation and consulting services business. For the first few years our office is in our house and Rodney is pleased with his role as landlord. Joel delights in calling him “Rodneyman.”

Another partner, Kathleen Harnish, joins us a couple of years later. As we merge our two companies we become TeamTech Inc.

I retire in 2002 to become an author so I can write *The Facilitative Way, Leadership That Makes the Difference*.

Dominican Republic 1990s

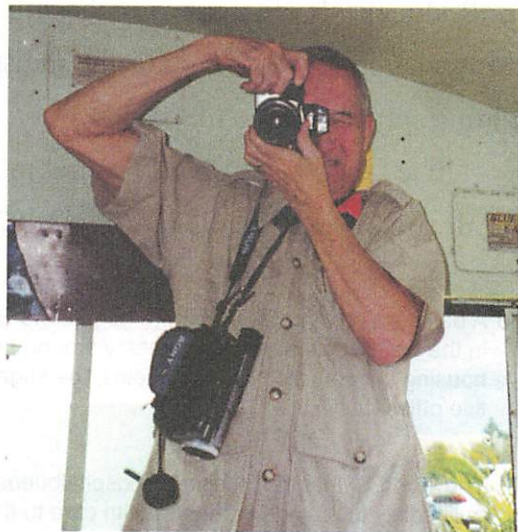
Sleep comes in sporadic spurts. The first night in La Romana the barking dog next door pauses just long enough for Rodney to doze off. Then the barking resumes with renewed vigor.

“What do you have to help a dog sleep?” Rodney asks one of the doctors the next day. “I have some chicken to give him if you have a pill.” The doctor produces a sleeping pill.

The next evening the dog receives the treat. A small piece of chicken with a pill tucked inside comes sailing over the fence. That night the barking slightly diminishes, but continues enough to annoy.

The next night Rodney throws another treat with two sleeping pills encased in some chicken. Quiet throughout the night endears Rodney to the medical team from Village Church. The pills don't hurt the dog but the team laughs when they see his dopey, slightly drugged expression the next day.

The Dominican Republic Medical Mission team from Village Presbyterian Church Prairie Village Kansas includes Rodney. Although not a medic, Rodney receives his assignment, “team photographer.”



Each team member knows their assigned job before they leave home. But as often happens, when Rodney sees something needs to be done, he tackles it. Such tasks often include getting water for the team, passing out medications, weighing mommas and babies, or helping Mac push the bus down the dusty road when it breaks down on the way to the bateys.³⁰ One essential job includes guiding villagers from intake, to the waiting area and then to see the doctor in the medical station and on to the pharmacy area. With so many villagers needing service the orderly and efficient process astounds Rodney as he assists. Everyone moves through the line with gentle patience.

He joins the January Medical Team of doctors, nurses, and medical students led by Ginny and Scott Beal every January for eight years. With no medical training, he nevertheless adds spirit, energy, and laughter that enliven the team.

On days when the team needs a pick-me-up or fatigue sets in, Rodney's gift of raising morale with a joke, a smile, or a laugh throws joy into the setting. In the midst of hardship situations, adding spirit becomes life-saving.

The Good Samaritan Hospital in La Romana³¹ began as the dream of Jean Luc Phanord in 1987. Prayers were said, land

30 A batey - a company town where sugarcane workers live. Bateyes can be found in the Dominican Republic, primarily around La Romana. A batey consists of the housing for workers, the sugar fields, the sugar mill and refinery, and administrative offices.

31 The Good Samaritan Hospital // hospitalbuensamaritano.org in La Romana was built solely to provide primary health care to the cane cutters who work and live in the bateyes. The majority of batey residents are of Haitian descent.

purchased, more prayers said and construction began. “God will provide us,” Jean Luc said. The hospital emerges over the years with volunteer labor, one floor at a time up to six floors. While doctors and nurses check and treat all health issues in the Battey, the hospital houses surgery and more complicated issues.

One day Rodney hears, “Rodney, you ought to scrub in with us. You need to include photos of the hospital’s two surgical units.” Washed, scrubbed and with gown and gloves on, he moves in to photograph. He catches his breath when the blood starts flowing, but he becomes a part of this well-oiled team of surgeons as he stiffens his back and continues documenting.



“Rodney, will you sterilize the instruments? And while you are at it...can you wipe the docs foreheads and noses.” Another role for Rodney.



Prior to the trip, Rodney explained to me, “We want to provide some good medical attention for these people who have absolutely nothing. Soap is on my list. I’ve got 500 bars of soap, and our dentist gave me cases of Listerine and toothpaste. I have learned to write good reports for Rotary, so I’ll provide them with a good photographic report.”

Rodney felt overwhelming gratitude for these opportunities. Later, when his energy and hearing decline, his decision to no longer participate in projects breaks his heart.

Place of Safety, Jamaica 1994

After their Rotary meeting Andy stops Rodney, “My father-in-law is a director of the Peace Corps in Jamaica. He asked if our Shawnee Mission Rotary Club would work on a Rotary Project in Jamaica. Can you help us get a project off the ground?”

The club discusses this proposal and decides to take up the challenge with Rodney in charge of the project. The project

concerns a shelter for abandoned and abused girls, the Granville Place of Safety. Rodney and Don Tyler fly to Jamaica and meet with George Palmer, the President of the Montego Bay Rotary Club to discuss working together.

George's excitement builds as he realizes this collaboration could work. They go to the Place of Safety to talk with Isaac Smith the superintendent of the facility.

Their first view of the Granville Place of Safety is disheartening. They travel a poorly maintained road to the edge of a shabby section of a small town. The derelict buildings look deserted. A dilapidated looking sign on the road points toward the facility.

The sense of isolation deepens when they see no sign at the facility entrance.



As they talk with Issac, the shortage of money to feed the girls, house them, and dress them makes Issac's job seem impossible. Rodney thinks, "Isaac has to be a saint to do this job."

Rodney coordinates with Rotary International in Evanston and applies for a \$5,000 Grant. The Shawnee Mission club adopts the project and agrees to provide the other \$5,000.

Most of the forty-three girls living in the Granville Place of Safety had been living on the streets and were placed there by the courts. Established in 1954, Granville provides care and safety for young women between eight and eighteen who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected. One teacher explains, "The girls come from dysfunctional families and have probably been abused every way conceivable."

Sixteen Rotary volunteers, each paying their own travel and housing expenses, travel to Jamaica for ten days in May 1994.

The visiting Rotarians travel in vans over rough roads for twenty-three miles along the coast highway and then approximately five more dusty miles from Falmouth toward the interior.

Rodney explains to the team, "We will refurbish existing facilities with painting, carpentry, and plumbing in order to give the girls a more humane place to live." The Rotarians bring tools, paint, and supplies plus a lawn mower. The group sighs with relief when all their boxes and tools finally move through Jamaica customs. They plan to leave the tools with the facility when they return home.

The plumbing at Granville presents the biggest challenge. They have water but old pipes are clogged. One shower and one

toilet work spasmodically. A hole in the floor serves as one toilet. Rodney makes use of his ditch digging expertise from high school to orchestrate ditch digging for the new pipes.

Even though they run out of paint, the thirty-eight gallons of paint the team brought with them does wonders.

The kitchen facilities are abysmal. Twigs and wood are gathered to cook on the springs of a rusty bed frame. A second, smaller team comes at a later date and installs a real kitchen with a working stove.



Dr. Sam, a gynecologist, gives every girl a physical, and finds one girl has syphilis, one is pregnant, and one severely mentally retarded.

Gary, one of the Kansas Rotarians later writes a description of what he saw during the work on the project:

I found holes in the siding and in the floors, sagging joists, one shower and one stool working and no water pressure, dirty buildings that had not been painted for years... a real task for a crew with some members sixty to seventy years of age. But during the ten days I saw impressive working together, Rotarians in action.

Dave organized some makeshift carpenters for work. Bob hammered, nailed, sawed and plumbed to the point of exhaustion. Jack did fine carpentry work, and always smiled. He made an attractive Rotary sign before leaving home which we installed at the entrance to the facility.

No new materials were available, so we tried to get parts from old stools to work.

John built ladders for the painters, did carpentry, and painting. Taylor painted trim, dug a ditch and took 4,000 pictures.

Rodney and Don did any necessary work during the day, then worried at night about if there was enough money, supplies, lunch for the workers, and transportation.

Dr. Sam gave medical exams and advise to the girls and staff, served as a carpenter, and waited for the painters to fall from the roofs. Pat calmly hung on with a rope as he painted a roof.

Jim hooked up a live waterline the first hour on the job, later

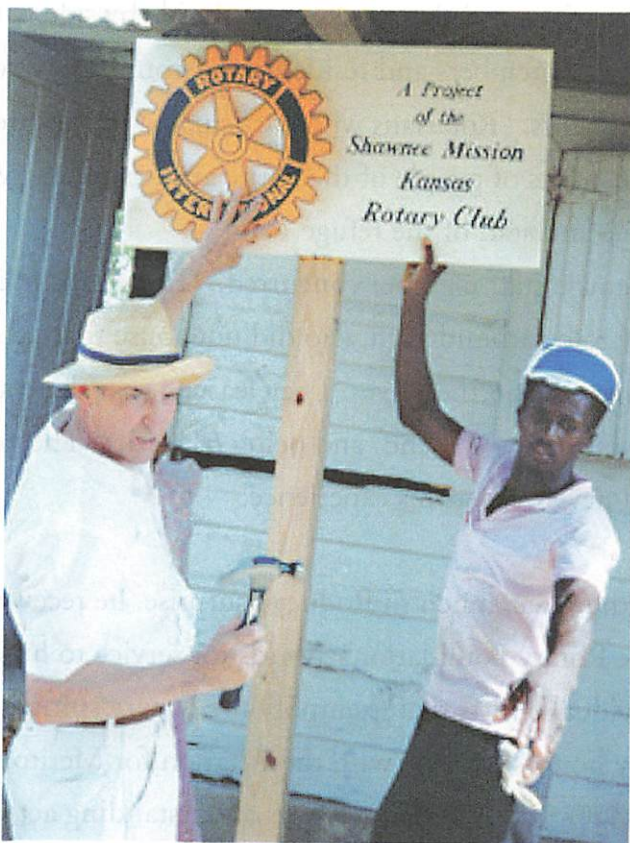
working to exhaustion, setting stools, knocking out walls, etc.

All the teams were filthy and hot from the Jamaican heat, working for a good common cause, and getting along well together for ten days.

Our wives painted, carried water to the workers and donated pillowcases filled with personal needs for the girls.

Black girls run their fingers through the hair of our white women. Friendships developed between the team, the girls and the staff.

Isaac, the facility director, was happy with the work accomplished by the Rotarians. I saw emotion and tears in the eyes of our crew when we left.”



One evening the team attends a Montego Bay Rotary meeting. Some of the local Rotarians come out to see the project and return with some sewing machines so the girls can learn a trade.

The lasting gift to the girls remains the demonstration of respect they experience from the visitors. The girls are hesitant to even smile at first. Later Isaac tells Rodney, "The girls trust you. The girls had never met men they could trust before."

Rodney's generosity of spirit transforms teams and situations as they work. Trust and respect builds with each pounding of a nail and swish of a paintbrush.

The Rotarians and their spouses work side by side with Granville shelter staff members and residents and community volunteers. Rodney comments, "Rotarians who participated in this project won a spot in the hearts of people of the entire area, especially with the young people and staff of the refuge."

One female staff member concurred, "These girls had the opportunity to be around men who did not abuse them... for some it was the first time in their lives. They learned that there are men who care about being a friend, and being of service. The young women will never forget this experience."

Over the years, much to Rodney's surprise, he receives Rotary awards. The Rotary Foundation's awards for service to humanity reflect individual efforts that exemplify the Rotary spirit.

Rotary honors Rodney with the Citation for Meritorious Service in 1990-91. "A demonstration of outstanding active service

to The Rotary Foundation for more than one year by participating in the grant-funded Portugal project.” The District Governor, Buck Newsome presents the award.

The second award in 1992 astonishes Rodney with one of the “75 Candles” seventy-five exemplary people or projects that spotlight Rotary’s spirit of service. This award is part of the Foundation’s 75th Anniversary and reflects the project he coordinated in Jamaica.

After receiving the two awards, a third recognizes Rodney as one of 150 Rotarians in 1993-94 with the Service Above Self Award. This award recognizes Rotarians who demonstrate their commitment to helping others by volunteering their time and talents.

Rotary Foundation’s highest service names Rodney one of fifty-one Rotarians world-wide with the Distinguished Service Award in 1996–97. This award recognizes Rotarians who have demonstrated exemplary service to the Foundation.

One of the men at Rotary International Foundation in Evanston describes Rodney’s uniqueness, “No other Rotarian in the world has been awarded all four awards.” Bragging never being Rodney’s style, I am filled with pride. He enjoys doing the work and lives his faith as he cares for those who have been forgotten.

Long before Rodney became a Rotarian, his father-in-law, a long-time Rotarian, once mentioned that he didn’t think Rodney had the job classification to be a Rotarian. Ironically, after Rodney became active in international projects, his father-in-law loved to brag about how he invited Rodney to join Rotary.

Zero Meridian, Five Degrees North...a Man of Service

Rodney and his friend, Rex arrive at zero meridian, five degrees north, Ghana, West Africa. They have come to work with local Rotarians to build a much needed wing on Ghana's Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital.³²

This 1995 Ghana Project with the Scottish Rotarians remained a treasure on Rodney's list of projects. It started with a simple phone call.

One evening, Rodney's friend Rex calls from his home in Helensburg, Scotland.

"Hello, what's on your mind?" Rodney asks.

"Reconstructive plastic surgery. A thousand bed hospital run by the government in Ghana needs a reconstructive plastic surgery unit. Too many kids don't have care. We'd like you to join us on our Rotary site visit. We need your documentation skills."

Rodney and Rex had worked together on the Rotary project in the Montemuro Mountains in northern Portugal.

Rodney asks, "When are you going? What will we be doing?"

"Dr. Jack Mustarde from our club has performed many operations in Ghana. His passion for reconstructive surgery draws him there. Now he wants to involve our Rotary club in this project."

32 The Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital is Ghana's premier health care facility. Affiliated with the medical school of the University of Ghana, with the National Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Unit.

We will meet with the eight Rotary Clubs in Accra and win their support to equip a new wing for reconstructive plastic surgery. That hospital needs more space, equipment and trained doctors. Your photography and documenting will help us talk with the local Rotarians.”

“Several years ago one of British Air’s flight attendants suffered from a severe facial distortion; Dr. Mustarde operated to straighten her face without charging. Since then, the airline can’t treat him well enough. The airline gives half fare to those flying from London to Accra for a humanitarian project.”

The three men meet in London’s Heathrow Airport where a British Air clerk greets them in the lounge, “May I have your tickets please?” She upgrades the men to first class. Astonished, Rodney thanks her profusely. Sitting in First Class will shed some of his tiredness during the long flight.

Early in the flight, the pilot comes back to talk with Dr. Mustarde. He discovers that Rex piloted in the RAF during WWII and suggests he come up to the cockpit. Anticipation flutters through Rodney as he hears the pilot say, “Bring your friend and come on up.”

Rodney follows Rex. The cockpit’s large space in the second story in the 747 surprises them. An apparatus of mysterious dials, knobs and levers surround the pilot’s cushiony seats.

Mesmerizing white clouds swirl past the windows. After a while the pilot turns to Rex saying, “When we get ready to land, come back up here and bring your cameras to film our landing in Accra.”

Rodney's face flushes with excitement as he organizes his camera gear. "What fun. I'd never get to do this at home." As they land his hands shake with excitement as he strains to capture in his camera the tall buildings in the center of the city.

Equator heat sends sweat running down sixty-nine year old Rodney's face. He wipes his face with his sleeve moaning, "Oh, what heat."

After collecting their luggage they meet their three Rotary hosts. Clouds of dust rise from the road on the way into the city. Scrubby vegetation, blinding sunlight, roving goats, frantic traffic, and throngs of vendors carrying wares on their heads fill the roadways.

Rodney's host navigates the city traffic skillfully and drives into a quiet suburban area to park at a low-slung attractive house. As they relax, enjoy a beer, and become acquainted, his host says, "I've been a Rotarian for ten years. I am a building engineer and my wife, an administrative nurse, oversees 200 nurses at one of the other big hospitals."

Rodney feels at home as he experiences hospitality and graciousness.

Over the next eight days, as Dr. Mustarde works at the hospital, Rodney's host drives he and Rex to meet with twenty-five Rotarians individually. They trudge through the heat from office to office in the center of downtown.

Dr. Mustarde joins Rex and Rodney to attend seven different

Rotary functions, one of which has a reception representing all eight Accra clubs.

The clubs all belong to the same Rotary District so they decide to apply for a Grant as a District to finance equipment and training needs. Rodney's experience in applying for grants helps immensely as he assists in preparation of the applications for Rotary International in Evanston, Illinois.³³ The Rotarians express excitement to be involved in this international project.

Dr. Mustarde, Rex and Rodney organize several site visits for Rotarians to the 1000 bed government hospital. Jerry Rawlings (President of Ghana) first hatched a plan to build a reconstructive plastic surgery wing on the hospital to repair cleft palates, cleft lips, deformities, birth defects, and burn victims. As the men see children with these defects and hear how surgery can correct them, a sense of urgency builds. They share their experience with their Rotary Clubs.

The need is a matter of life and death. In the country a child with a major disfigurement is a burden to their families and can't be supported. If a child can't work he or she is hidden and ignored. A child with a cleft palate is left alone and only given a little water. Families know someone disfigured will be unable to work.

Two government representatives, both Presbyterian, accompany Rodney and Rex on some of the visits. On Sunday Rodney and Rex attend morning worship with them. They are introduced to the

³³ The 69-bed capacity Centre, inaugurated in May 1997, is a wholly Ghanaian facility and renders services in reconstructive plastic surgery as well as trains future plastic surgeons for Ghana and the West African Sub-Region.

congregation and then watch several Ghanaian dances as part of the service.

The congregation prays for the visiting Rotarians. Later Rodney comments to Rex, "They prayed for you seventeen minutes and me for one minute."

"How do you know the prayer was eighteen minutes?"

"I timed it."

The days start at 5:30 in the morning, with a cup of coffee, and they journey in the heat to one appointment after another. One morning Rodney looks in a mirror and wonders, "What am I doing? I could be home with my own shower, having a good breakfast, and feeling much cooler."

To visit the hospital wards the men put on scrubs that come out of a steam disinfectant. "These steamy hot scrubs made me the hottest I've ever been," Rodney says.

The wards seem impossibly crowded with beds pushed together as close as possible. A plethora of smells wafts through the air and they try to minimize the air they breathe. Body odors, food smells and the stench of urine and heat all blend into an ugly stinky stew. Patients bring their own bedding and a family member takes care of each patient. A nurse supervises the family members as they change dressings, give medication, and swap dirty sheets for clean ones. A family member or a caregiver does everything including bringing meals. Dreams and aspirations for reconstructive surgery from cleft palates, fires, and accidents become real as nurses and family members share stories of individual needs.

Rodney sets to work to photographically document the patients. Taking the photographs is not easy. When asked to document the most difficult cases Rodney feels self-conscious. Some of the disfigurements are so ugly it seems too intrusive to look at them, let alone point a camera at their face.

“One burned little boy had his head wrapped. He looked like a mummy except for his unbandaged eyes. I could see his eyes fill with a smile as we talked with him. Gasoline spilled on him and caught fire in an automobile accident. I’ll never forget his smile and his courage. As we walked through the hospital, I felt guilty trying to take pictures. But they wanted the pictures to document the need.”

A break in the rigors of visiting the hospital and Rotarians comes when Rex and Rodney visit with Ghana President Rawlings. The President greets them warmly. They sit in comfortable chairs near a table set with tea and cookies. He explains how he and Dr. Mustarde first dreamed of providing reconstructive surgery to Ghana and West Africa. President Rawlings tells stories of his broader hopes for Ghana. Rawlings father, a Scottish businessman did a lot of business in Ghana and his Ghanaian mother gave President Rawlings a multicultural heritage.

Rex and Rodney explain the Rotary Club’s plans to be partners with the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital. They sense that the President’s position and power can help the Ghanaian Rotarians accomplish their hopes and dreams. His graciousness caps an exciting and eventful week.

At the end of each day the men relax with a beer. As they tell each other stories of their visits Rodney never thinks about the need to drink water in such a hot climate. Only as they head to the airport to go home does he feel a strange weakness and dizziness. He realizes that his dry mouth is crying out for water. As thirst consumes him, he notices that his sweating in the heat has almost stopped.

When he boards the plane, he recognizes his dehydration and motions to the cabin attendant, "I need some water."

The cabin attendant brings a liter bottle and pours a couple of glasses. Rodney keeps motioning him back. Finally the attendant gives him a whole bottle.

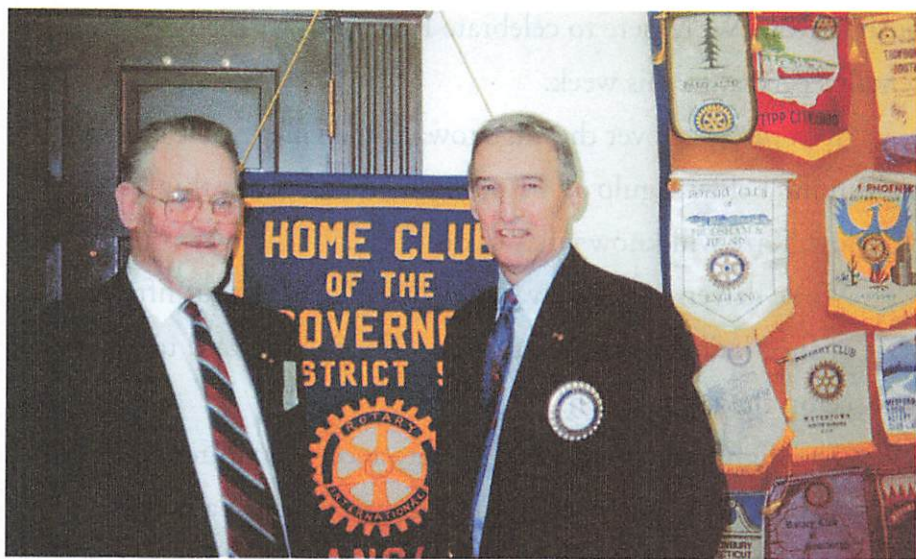
Rodney thinks, "I could sure use that first class seat now."

Years later Rex's daughter calls Rodney, "We've been told that Rex probably will die in the next few days. Can you come? He wants to see you one more time."

Rodney hops the first plane to Scotland. Relief floods him as he arrives in time. Rex's Rotary Club is presenting an award to Rex. They ask Rodney to make the presentation to Rex in his hospital bed. Rodney spends close to a precious hour with Rex before death claims him.

When he returns home a friend asks, "Wasn't that trip expensive?"

Rodney's response, "What price friendship?"



Rodney with Rex Cook

An Improbable Hike³⁴ Arizona, 1996

As we are about to board the helicopter for the short flight to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, we hear the pilot say, “Today is the last flight of the helicopter down to the Supai village.”

We stop and stare at him. “What’s wrong?”

“The regular helicopter crashed yesterday. No one is hurt, but this is the last flight to Supai for an indeterminate time. The regular pilot refuses to fly any more; he crashed a couple of times in Viet Nam, and he has had enough.”

We look at each other. A wave of panic sweeps over me, but I

³⁴ This story first published in *Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia* by Kaze Gadway and Priscilla H Wilson

push it away. We're here to celebrate Rodney's 70th birthday and that remains central to this week.

We both gaze over the edge toward the village we can't see eight miles below. I gulp and Rodney says, "Let's not think about this now. Kaze will know what to do."

We've driven to the Havasupai Tribal Lands about fifty miles west of the National Park South Rim. We look forward to what we will see on the flight down.

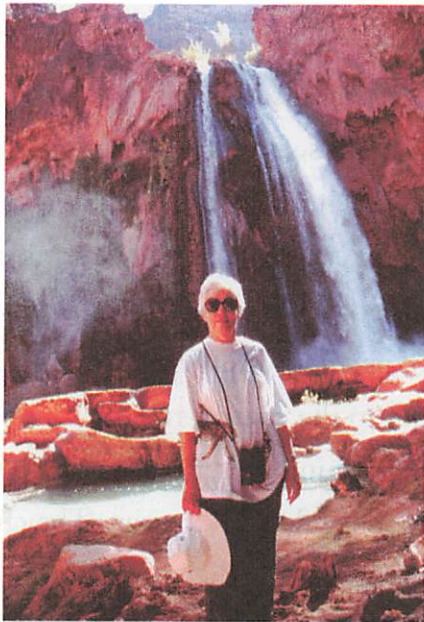
The flight goes by too fast. I try to look every direction at once, but it is a blur of colors and impressions. In a short three-minutes we land in a cloud of dust.

Our friend, Kaze stands at the bottom with her faithful black lab, Kuja Hapa. After landing on the village helipad, we walk the powdery dirt path to her small house. She serves the Havasupai Tribe as tribal planner and was hired to write grants to fund programs for the tribe. She has also become letter writer and confidant for many in the village.

Each day we venture forth to feast our eyes on jagged rocks, steep cliffs, and breathtaking colors. The banks of the Cataract River open up to numerous side canyons. They beckon us to explore unknown wonders. The isolated community spreads out on both sides of the river. We rarely see residents during our walks. Many are working in the tribal offices, the school or the store while others are farming in the fields.

Tranquility descends on us after our three-mile hike to the base of the Havasupai Waterfall. Kaze explains, "Havasupai means

people of the blue-green waters and these waters are sacred to the tribe.” We watch clouds of mist rise from the water as it falls from a great height into the turquoise pools. Profound silence settles over us like a cloak.



After a week of exhilarating hikes we celebrate Rodney’s birthday with ice cream, cake and conversation about the gorgeous sights we’ve seen. I push our central question out of my mind as I say, “When the canyon walls encircled us it seemed like we were in a giant Eagle’s nest.”

Kaze finally says what we’ve all been thinking, “To leave the Canyon, I think our options boil down to four. You can stay in the canyon forever, which isn’t very practical. Or you can ride horses to the top, charter a helicopter, or hike out.”

“We don’t want to spend money on a private helicopter.”

“I’ve hiked up many times,” Kaze says. “It is an eight-mile trail to the canyon rim. I need to go out to do some business for the tribe, so I can climb with you. Do you two think you can do that?”

The hike seems the most adventuresome. Our ages, seventy, sixty-five and fifty-six don’t enter the conversation. “We’ll have to prepare carefully,” Kaze reminds us.

Rodney and I haven’t used walking sticks for hiking before, but this seems like the time to try one. Kaze has a collection of sticks. We test several and each choose one that fits us. We pack easy-to-carry bags with bottles of water, a small, but nourishing lunch, and a couple of pairs of socks. We send our suitcases (like mail) on the mule-train to the canyon rim.

Very early in the morning we set out on our nine-hour, eight-mile journey from the valley floor to the rim. The cliffs keep changing shape and colors. One minute they rise so steeply overhead it feels like we’re walking through a tunnel. The next minute the cliffs flatten like a giant stepped on them. The wonders of the shifting scenes override our tiredness.

About noon we climb onto a big flat rock for a mid-day rest. Slowly we eat our sandwiches and fruit. We drink lots of water and change to a dry pair of socks. Kuja Hapa has followed us closely and sits in Rodney’s shadow. We laugh as the postal mule train with our suitcases goes by on the trail we have been climbing.

After lunch, we continue. Billowing white clouds cap the scenes like daubs of whipped cream. Shadows in the striated

canyon walls play tricks on our eyes. When the high cliffs close in on a narrow passage, we crouch down to walk through. At other moments, when the walls open, we see broad panoramas of contrast.

The last portion of the trail shifts to steep switchbacks. As we climb up, up, up and back and forth sweat runs down our faces. The sharp incline triggers a lot of huffing and puffing.

Rodney and I both gasp with relief as we walk the last switchback and turn into the parking lot. Our suitcases sit all alone on the rim at the edge of the parking lot and we collapse by our bags in sheer gratitude and laughter.

Rodney hollers at some hikers who are starting toward the trail, "I just turned seventy and I made it."

Our gratefulness overcomes the aches, thirst, and dust. We tackled this tough climb and made it to the top. This improbable day has been a joyous gift.

The camaraderie of the day and the beauty of the canyon sustained us in a difficult, but breathtaking journey. Kaze laughingly quotes St. John of the Cross, "*I am not made or unmade by the things which happen to me but by my reactions to them. That is all God cares about.*"

I am not sure why some adventures cause fear or discomfort and others do not. Why did the thought of this eight-mile hike or our energy level not generate stress? As we talk about the day during dinner we realize that being surrounded by peaceful beauty enveloped us in a state of calm. We supported each other with laughter and care and quietly soaked ourselves in the serenity for the necessary climb.

Blue Invasion 1999

Rodney and I spend forty-five years agreeing that we never want to own a vacation house. Our love of scouring the world stops us from settling for any one spot. Rodney's DNA includes an exclusive exploring molecule. From bike trips to the Cimarron River in Oklahoma to walking with the soldiers in Iwo Jima to driving across the country trying not to miss a thing, settling never appeals to us. But water has a strange pull on us both. To own a piece of real estate by the ocean attracts us in a strange way we can't ignore.

Now we own a house on Hatteras Island North Carolina. Everything is blue. We sit upstairs and look across a glass table top, through the ice blue oil lamp to a pale gray blue-sky and darker gray blue ocean. We soak in the ambience of Blue Heaven.

In the early days when Ben and Tim were young, we loved camping in a large blue canvas tent. We sat around a fire pit, cooked hot dogs, roasted marshmallows or relaxed, hiked, and checked out many forested paths. We wandered through first one state park after another.

Nine-month old Mary joined our family in June 1964. Camping trips became more sophisticated. A pop-up trailer took us to Expo '67 in Montreal. Rodney, Ben, Tim, and I investigate most of the Expo sites while Mary joined small children in child-care.

By 1981 we rent an RV. Rodney, Mary and I check out the Badlands with their mounds and canyons painted in striated shades



of brown, red and white. After Mount Rushmore, we stop at the birthplace of Sacajawea in Idaho and purchase Mary a pair of Shoshone moccasins as a symbol of her heritage. We finally arrive in Leavenworth, Washington, to visit Tim.

We wander as the mood strikes us and pry into many corners of the northwest. We watch a dipper, the stocky dark grey bird, bob his whole body up and down feeding on the bottom of a bubbling rocky brook. RV trips intensify our delight at being able to park in different woods each night, explore trails, and drive off to the next adventure.

We purchase a 23-foot RV in 1985 and camp in Minnesota, bird at the Grand Canyon, and explore Hopi villages in Arizona. Rodney relishes puttering with all the parts that keep an RV in good

shape. His practical know-how for fixing water tanks and repairing things keeps us on the road. Solutions to any problem can be found in the repair manual while we sit around the campfire in the evening.

In 1993 we join Mary at her boyfriend's house on Hatteras Island in Avon, North Carolina. Rodney and I walk the beach endlessly captivated by the unceasing roll of the ocean waves, the rippling sea oats and the flitting of sea birds everywhere.

For the next six years we journey to other states and distant countries for birding trips and safaris. But we also spend a week or two on Hatteras Island in a rented house in Avon. This satisfies our need for both wanderlust and peace at the ocean.

Then one year while we are in Avon, our friend Debbie³⁵ tells us, "The house you have rented for next year is vacant at the moment. Would you like to walk through it since it is just down the street?"

Rodney and I stroll through Blue Heaven, an attractive ocean front house tucked behind the dunes. We agree, "This is a delightful house. It is perfect for our time here next summer."

Several months later, Debbie calls, "Blue Heaven is on the market. Would you like to buy it?"

"We will think about it," I tell her.

I call back in a few days, "Rodney and I have talked. We don't have time or inclination to furnish a house."

"It comes all furnished, down to the dishes, and everything."

"Oh, we need to think about that."

35 Property Manager for Outer Beaches Realty.

Rodney and I mull over our lifestyle, finances, and dreams of the future, and anything else that might have a bearing on this momentous decision. We argue back and forth with ourselves, “We’ve always said we didn’t want to own two houses.” But the location on the beach is stirring our heartstrings.

At last we call Debbie back, “We’ve decided to buy Blue Heaven. To own a house on the ocean never entered our plans, but this seems like an opportunity that can’t be missed. Let us know how to proceed.”

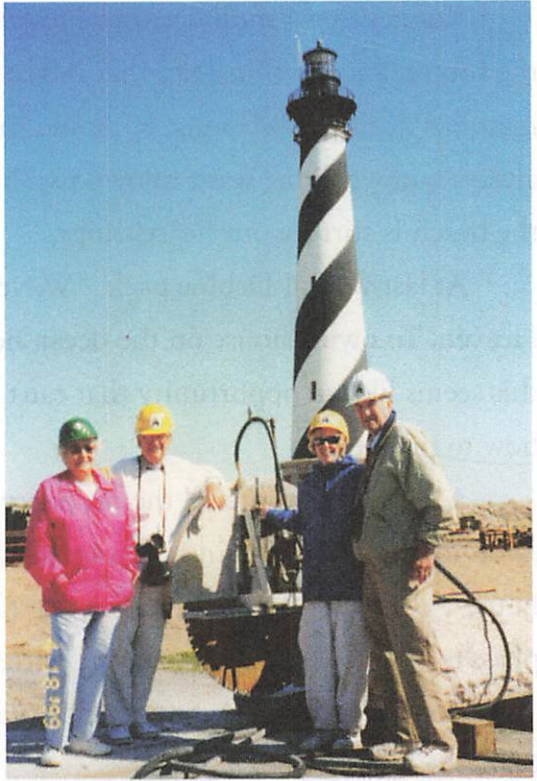
A lawyer draws up all the necessary papers. Rodney returns to Avon to handle the closing. He obtains permission to move into the house a couple of days early, so he doesn’t have to look for another place to stay before he signs on the dotted line.

Rodney’s time in Avon coincides with the moving of the Hatteras Light House.³⁶

Debbie’s husband, Mike works for the National Park Service and his crew’s task sends them under the Light House to cut it loose. Over a beer one evening Mike asks Rodney, “Would you like to come with us tomorrow and see our work under the Light House?”

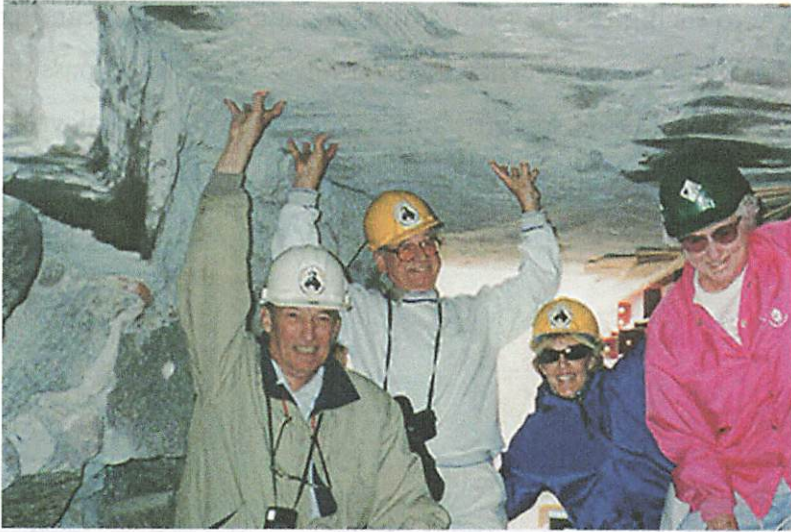
“What a rare treat. Of course.”

36 In 1999, the Cape Hatteras Light Station, which consists of seven historic structures, was successfully relocated 2,900 feet from the spot on which it had stood since 1870. Because of the threat of shoreline erosion, a natural process, the entire light station was safely moved to a new site where the historic buildings and cisterns were placed exactly as they had been at the original site.



Moving the Hatteras Light House



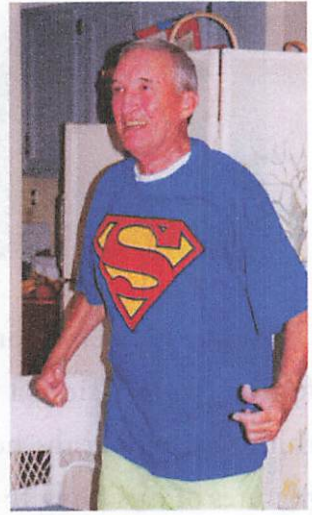


Blue Heaven belongs to us now. The original owners were fanatic North Carolina University fans so blue dominates everything throughout the house. The previous owners loved cats so pictures of cats hung through out the house. We are bird people so slowly we replace all the cat pictures with my bird photographs. The house takes on the Wilson personality and we enjoy a week or two by the ocean once or twice a year.

One evening in 2000 after a delicious fish dinner with family and friends, Rodney announces, “We will now have an Award Ceremony. Each girl under twenty-five years of age please line up by the window.” He points to the spot.

Granddaughter Nora, age five rushes up. Granddaughter-in-law Phaedra and four young daughters of friends line up.

One by one he pulls out of a bag a Superman T-shirt and hands the right size to each girl. The room erupts in laughter and screaming as the girls giggle how much they love their award. Rodney's passion for surprises and honoring girls and women fill him with playfulness as the girls quickly put on their Superman award.



Each summer and fall hurricane season threatens the east coast. We had agreed that if a hurricane became a real threat to Avon we would evacuate. In July 2004 Tropical Storm Weather Channel Warnings help us keep track of impending storms. We listen closely as the forecasters repeat, "Tropical Storm Alex currently remains relatively minor and way off shore. We are not issuing an evacuation order at this time."

By 2:00 a.m. Alex becomes the first hurricane of the season. By morning Alex surges straight for us as a Category 2 hurricane.

The option to evacuate comes too late. The roads are closed.

In trepidation, we watch the gray swirl of water and clouds over the ocean. We spend most of the day mopping up water leaks under the deck door. We watch the rain come straight out of the east toward us, and then out of the north, the west and then the south. Instead of fear overwhelming us, fascination emerges.

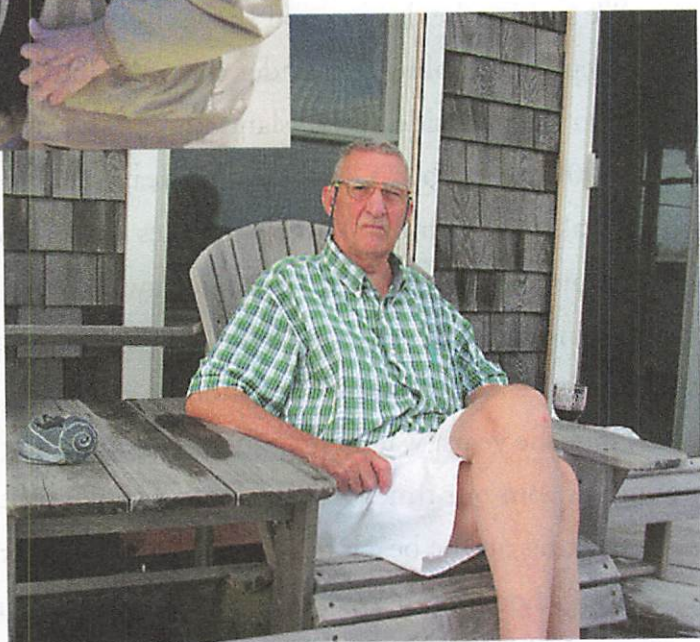
We live on the north edge of town. Daughter Mary, her children and a friend are in a rental house five miles south of us in Avon. Relief fills us as both houses keep phone lines alive. We call each other numerous times during the storm, "What is happening where you are now?" I experience a moment of panic when Mary reports at the height of the storm, "Debbie suggests I move my rental car across the street where the ground is a little higher. Otherwise it may flood."

We survive the day in good shape. Rodney's calming attitude helps keep my bubbling fear under control. Houses by Pamlico Sound on the west side of the island flood, but the water stops about 500 yards before it reaches Blue Heaven. Maximum sustained winds peaked at 77 mph. As the wind dies down, Rodney suggests we walk up to highway 12 (a long block away) to see the extent of the flooding. A lot of water still stands on the highway so we decide not to venture across toward the sound.

Over the years, watching grandchildren playing in the surf gratifies us. But our times with each other remain the most special.

Walking on the beach furnishes a time for quiet contemplation for sharing thoughts and reflections. The relentless surf spellbinds

us. We laugh as the sanderlings scurry to follow the white foam as it rolls in and out across the sand. Whether relaxing on our deck, sitting under an umbrella on the beach or walking along the edge of the surf we have found a spot that remains magic for us.



At the end of each day, we enjoy quiet time on the deck gazing out across the ever changing blues and grays of the ocean and clouds. Tranquility fills our hearts. When we come to Blue Heaven our imaginations soar like the pelicans gliding along the shoreline. Our dreams and thoughts drift to the white billowing clouds over the steely blue of the Atlantic Ocean.

Outer Banks vacations endure as special meditative times. Rodney had an amazing ability to sit quietly just thinking. We often tease him, “Are you sleeping?” No, he just exercises a solitary ability to go inward in reflection.

Through the years we agree, “Blue Heaven is so light, open and comfortable that our souls are fed when we gaze out the window at the ocean.”



SPIRITUAL ELDERING

A New Beginning in Being Old

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary 2002

The word safari conjures up magical images. The newly published *Birds of East Africa* inspired the American Birding Association to set up a safari to Kenya in 1996. After some serious pondering Rodney, my sister Pam and I say “yes” and join them.

Dave Richards, an expert on Kenyan wildlife joins the safari as one of the guides. Something clicks when Rodney and I meet Dave. This first of nine adventures with Dave keeps us returning through the years with children and grandchildren. Dave and his wife Val become two of our best friends; tourism is vital for African economy; we love to photograph the birds and animals; and the magic in the air entices us to return over and over again.

Dave suggests we plan a safari to South Africa and Botswana to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary in 2002. We “google” Botswana’s Okavango Delta and are intrigued by its terrain. We invite my sister, Pam and her husband, Karl to join us.

Dave meets us in Cape Town at the Cape Grace Hotel on the waterfront. All goes smoothly and we relax to enjoy every luxurious

moment. But the greatest luxury is being with the person we have loved for fifty-five years (five years of dating and fifty years of marriage).

A gorgeous drive north to the West Coast National Park discloses birds of blues, reds, yellows and greens that cry for the click of our cameras.



The next day we drive south to Cape Good Hope. Two Southern Right whales cavort in the water as we approach the Cape. We struggle to stand and take pictures in a wind as strong as we've ever

experienced. We remember tales of olden days when ships crashed trying to round the Cape of Good Hope. “That wind is going to blow us off of the continent,” Rodney laughs.

Hiking through Cape Town’s Kirstenbosch famous botanical garden introduces us to indigenous plants of South Africa. Our cameras stay frantically busy as we walk through miles of greens, fuchsias, golds, oranges, reds and purples. The indescribable beauty of the flowers and birds, particularly the sunbirds, leaves us breathless. This garden nestles at the eastern foot of Table Mountain, a “must see” of Cape Town. Rodney says, “Why do repair tasks have to close the cableway today? How disappointing.”

Safari time arrives. We take two flights north, first to Johannesburg and then on to Maun Botswana. The change to the smaller plane out of Maun sparks anticipation as we shift into “safari mode.” The plan calls for us to go to three camps in the spectacular Okavango Delta. In each location we will explore the Delta in a small boat, called a mokoro, as well as on foot and game drives. No dry land connects the camps so small planes are the mode of transportation. We fly to Jacana Camp, surrounded by seasonally inundated floodplains and papyrus swamps. Each tent built on raised wooden decks ensures awe-inspiring panoramic views of the Delta. The camp’s concentration of animals depends on the flow of the water. Rodney adjusts his camera settings, “Being able to capture the mystique of this area could be a full time job.”

We hold our breath as we climb into the mokoro the first

time. These low dug-out canoe type polled boats, not paddled, seem most unsafe for camera equipment. We try not to sound worried as we both mutter, "What happens if we tip over?" We discover they are quite sturdy unless we bump into another mokoro.

"The river that never finds the sea" creates this most unusual delta. Crystal clear channels spread out and disappear into the land. We move through papyrus-fringed banks that wander through the water like roads through a jungle.



The elegant red lechwe and shy sitatunga³⁷ bound through water that looks like more grass. On the stretches of dryer land we spot lion and cheetah sharing the floodplains with large herds of elephant and buffalo.

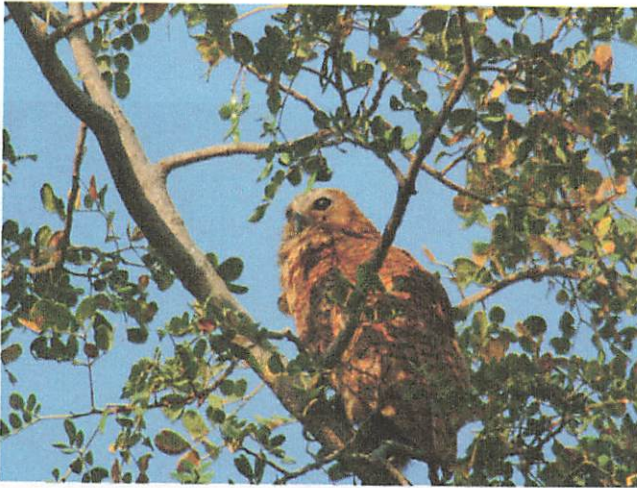
For our sundowner (drinks and snacks as the sun sets) a somewhat larger boat takes us out into a cove and anchors. While we enjoy our drinks a sizeable pod of hippos raise their heads to squint at us. Their barrel-shaped torsos, snorting and mouths opening wide every few minutes cause a tremor of anxiety to ripple through us. The hippo is highly aggressive and unpredictable, ranked among the most dangerous animals in Africa. But, Rodney and I have been with Dave four times by now so we trust his decisions.

Each day we experience the glistening waterways from a mokoro. We struggle to capture in our cameras iridescent dragonflies, jewel-like kingfishers and water lilies. Tiny frogs of every color cling to the papyrus.

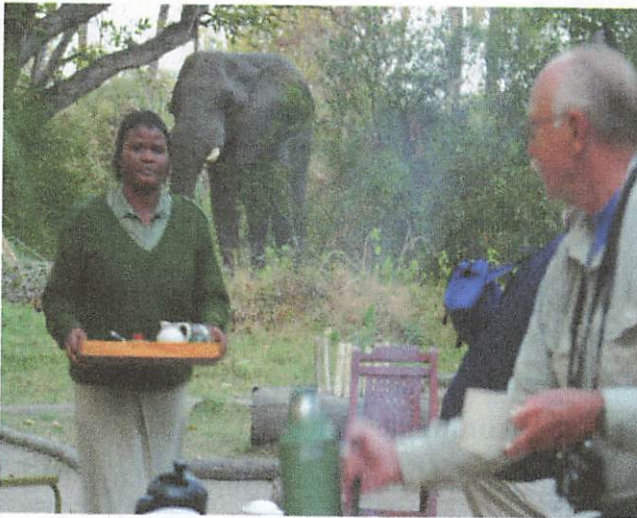
After dinner Rodney and I relax by an open fire under the stars. He sighs, "This is so unbelievable. I wish I could package the quiet and take it home with us."

We travel by water to a small island the next morning to hunt for the Pell's Fishing Owl. We discussed at breakfast how hard these owls are to find. Dave points to one soon after we land and all have a good view. Quiet laughter erupts as we agree he looks like a puffed out brown teddy bear.

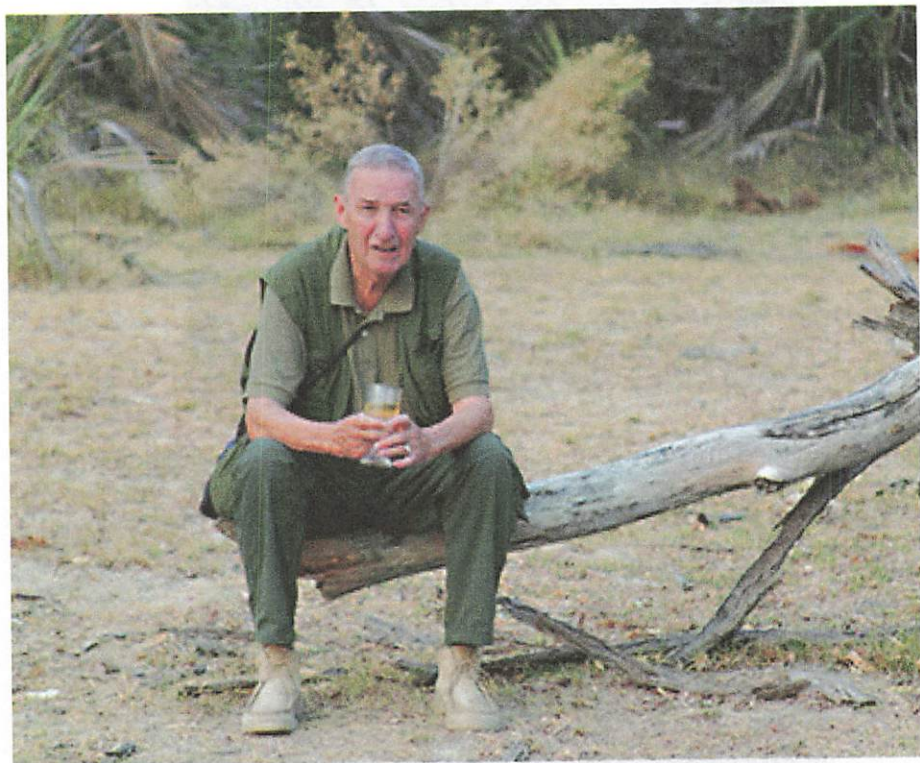
37 Lechwe, a deer-like animal are found in marshy areas where they eat aquatic plants. They use the knee-deep water as protection from predators. Their legs are covered in a water-repellant substance which allows them to run quite fast in knee-deep water. The sitatunga is a medium-sized antelope.



The next morning, an elephant crashes into our breakfast area and we hastily scatter as he walks by the tables, and chairs, and dishes fly in all directions.



Mid-morning, a stop for coffee, or tea each day provides a welcome break to share the excitement of the morning and rest for a minute.



Our next camp, Kaporata, is situated on a tranquil and shady island covered with huge sausage trees.

Tony, our local guide, picks us up for the long drive to the camp from the tiny airport. Soon he stops as he spots a sable antelope. We watch this stunning endangered animal we've not seen before. We whisper in hushed tones, savoring this large dark brown antelope with brown and white stripes the length of its face. Its majestic tall horns curve back over his body and we struggle to get the best photo of those horns.

As we continue Rodney spies a small brown bird on the ground. “Can we stop to see this bird?” Tony seems slightly exasperated and wonders out loud, “Are we going to stop for every tiny bird?”

After lunch, our rest time rejuvenates us before another period of searching. Late afternoon we welcome the stop for our sundowner. Time to review what we have seen during the day followed by dinner draws another unbelievable day to a close.

One evening Tony stages our sundowner with a magical view of the sun going down while the full moon comes up.

The next morning, as we leave camp, two male lions parade down the road in front of us. Tony calls them the “managers,” the guys in charge. Tony assumes they want to chase the “Ghost,” a solitary male lion out of the area. We are riveted as Tony drives through and over small trees and bushes for the next couple of hours to keep the lions in sight. When they finally lie down, we take off to find open land to walk for a while. As Tony drives through some grassland, Rodney says, “The yellow, tan and orange colors of these grasses are the same as our Kansas wheat just before harvest.”

A thirty-minute flight transfers us to our next camp, Pom Pom, in the south part of the Okavango Delta.

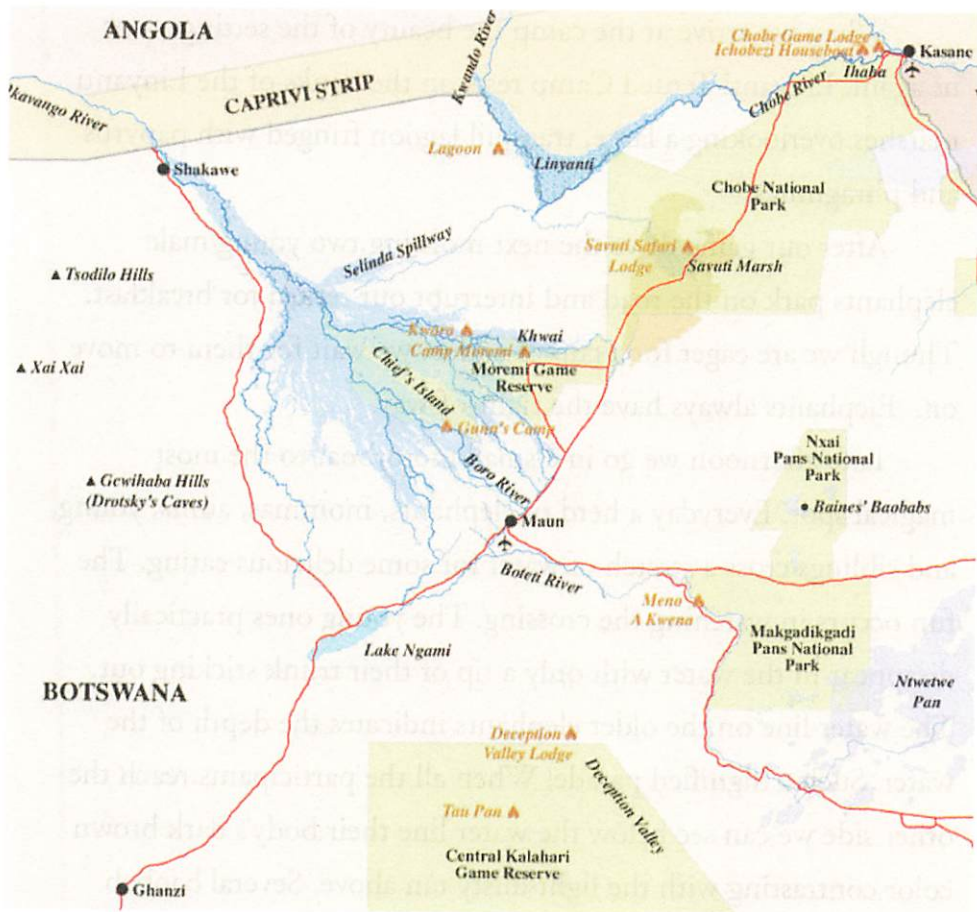
As we approach the camp we gasp at the scenic lagoon and big trees spreading shade over all of the tents.

We have no electricity in our tent and don't even miss it. The paraffin lamps glow and spread a wonderfully warm atmosphere.

For the afternoon, Map Ives, the guru of the Okavanga and trainer of guides joins us because the local camp guide has gone to Maun to take his Botswana guide exams. Dave says, "No one is more knowledgeable about the Okavanga." Map's wealth of knowledge and gracious style captivates us.

During one of the slow times in the afternoon, Map startles us as he hops out of the vehicle, finds a pad of paper and pencil and draws a sketch of the Okavanga Delta. He proceeds to give us a marvelous talk about the last million years of the Delta. "The Okavango River drains the summer rainfall from the Angola highlands. The Delta in Botswana is a very large inland delta formed where the Okavango River reaches a tectonic trough in the central part of the basin of the Kalahari. All the water reaching the Delta is ultimately evaporated and transpired, and does not flow into any sea or ocean." We are captivated by this remarkable geography.

A short flight takes us next to Linyanti Camp. On the way from the airport to camp, a pride of lionesses and cubs lies sprawled out all over a fallen tree. We don't move for ages as we shoot pictures from every angle. One or two lionesses mesmerize us, but this is a pride of six.



When we arrive at the camp the beauty of the setting stuns us again. Linyanti Tented Camp rests on the banks of the Linyanti marshes overlooking a large, tranquil lagoon fringed with papyrus and phragmites.³⁸

After our game drive the next morning two young male elephants park on the road and interrupt our return for breakfast. Though we are eager for a cup of coffee, we wait for them to move on. Elephants always have the right-of-way.

Late afternoon we go in a small motorboat to the most magical spot. Everyday a herd of elephants, mommas, aunts, young, and siblings cross a stretch of water for some delicious eating. The fun occurs in watching the crossing. The young ones practically disappear in the water with only a tip of their trunk sticking out. The water line on the older elephants indicates the depth of the water. Such a dignified parade! When all the participants reach the other side we can see below the water line their body's dark brown color contrasting with the light dusty tan above. Several baobab trees seem almost fragile where the elephants have chewed the trunk; they look like they may fall over anytime.

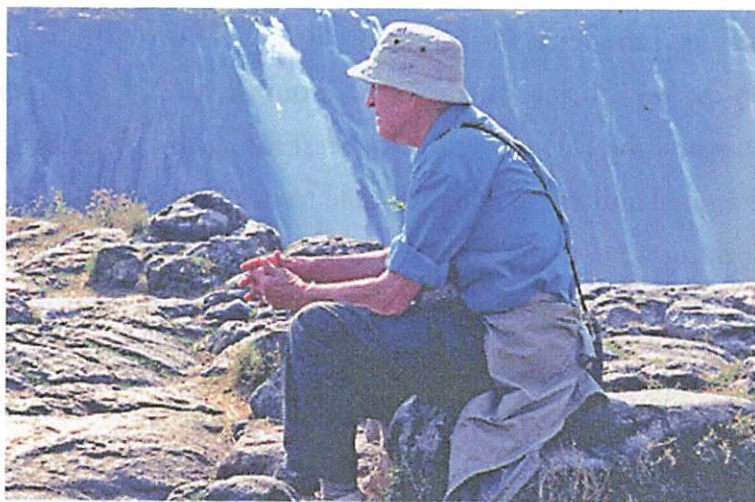
Our safari adventure comes to an end and we sadly pack. We fly to Kasane³⁹ and then drive to Zimbabwe and the Victoria Falls

38 *Phragmites*, a common reed, is a large perennial grass found in wetlands throughout temperate and tropical regions of the world.

39 Kasane a town in Botswana, is close to Africa's 'Four Corners', where four countries almost meet: Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Kasane is at the far north-eastern corner of Botswana where it serves as the administrative center of the Chobe District.

Hotel. Established in 1904 the hotel overlooks the Victoria Falls Bridge and the gorges below. This old British hotel resembles a long-gone era.

We leave the hotel the next morning for a ten-minute walk to the falls. The water, flowing at a lower level this time of the year, nevertheless flings lots of mist into the air. Dave says, “I’ve been here during times of high water levels when the mist almost hides the falls.”



As we walk the path at the edge of the falls, Rodney and I pause to reflect on our many years together. We share a fiftieth celebration hug and a loving kiss.

Our walk along the Zimbabwe edge of the falls leads to a spot where we can look across to Zambia and the bridge connecting the two countries. Returning to the beginning of the path. Rodney

offers to sit at the top and ponder the beauty while he watches all our stuff. Dave leads me down some steep, wet stairs to a better place to capture photos.

Pam, Karl and I decide to take a helicopter ride in the afternoon. Rodney stays at the hotel to take a nap. During the helicopter ride we see clouds of mist spurting high above the landscape. I ache to share this view with Rodney and I shoot my camera so fast I hardly have time to breathe. "I can't believe how far from the falls we can see the mist rising above the earth. Think what that would look like when the water is high."

On the way back to the hotel I tell our driver, "My husband has been searching for a carved wildebeest for ages. They are his favorite animal and we've not been able to find one."

"I think we can find one," he says. We stay in the car while he asks around. He goes with a gentleman to an open-air craft market and returns in a while with a stunning, dark wood-carved wildebeest. I am thrilled, pay him and thank him profusely.

When we return to the hotel I present Rodney with his stunning anniversary gift. His joy overflows as he does a quick dance around the room with the wildebeest.

The next day, Dave locates a small boat to take us on the river above the falls. We savor this treat of so many birds, and the soft breeze wafting above the river. The tranquil flow of the water feels unrelated to the roaring falls not far away. Dave could not have thought of a better way to end our trip.

The next day we return to Johannesburg and Dave flies on home to Nairobi. Pam, Karl, Rodney and I check in at the Grace Hotel. A driver with Wilderness Safaris takes us for a tour of Soweto (South Western Township). We drive past Nelson Mandela's home marveling at the journey of his life as the experience of Soweto subdues us. We drive down the only street in the world that produced two Nobel Prize winners, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. Veneration and awe filled the car.

To live through three weeks of any trip leaves us weary by the time we return home. As a capstone for our fiftieth anniversary we agree, "This tops it all."

A Magical Christmas 2006

The alarm rings at 2:50 a.m. We progress through the hubbub of arriving at the airport, checking in and finally boarding the Delta flight to Costa Rica. A scarlet line across the horizon by 6:30 fades into orange as it spreads toward the blue of the sky. By 6:50 the bright red ball bursts through the horizon.

A Delta attendant pushes Rod's wheelchair through the San Jose Airport. We swish around long lines for immigration. As we round a corner my feet get tangled up in the bag that grandson, Warren is pulling. Down I go. Amid much consternation I'm deposited in another wheel chair and we gather up our bags. We roll

on, a parade of two wheelchairs and various family members.

This Christmas we plan to honor the year's four significant life events.

Grandpa, my husband of fifty-four years, turned eighty years old in November.

Our Oregon son, Tim, reached the half-century mark of fifty in September.

Our first granddaughter-in-law, Phaedra, turned thirty years of age in November.

And in a different genre, Jeff, twenty-four year old grandson, served in the Army and now is a civilian again.

Costa Rica swirled to the top of the list of possibilities for an extraordinary Christmas for fourteen people ranging in age from two and a half to eighty.

At the end of a four and a half hour, tooth-jarring drive from San Jose to the Pacific Coast, Quepos presents a spectacular seascape setting. A couple of miles further, we arrive at Manuel Antonio National Park, where trogons, herons, squirrel monkeys and sloths range. Buena Vista Villas in the Park accommodates our multi-interest crew with four rented Casas. Several swimming pools are available, but one quickly becomes our favorite. The waterfall pool spewing water from the mountainside turns every swim into a joyful splashing contest.

The week offers many memorable moments: zip line for the bravest (Rodney and I love being able to live it through film),

the catamaran ride to see the dolphins, digital cameras capturing monkeys, sloths, sunsets and kids playing. Rodney and I gaze toward the ocean the first morning to drink in the panorama of blues, greens, reds, and yellows as we inhale the sweet tropical air. This profusion of flowers, trees, and a curved road off down a hill beckon us for further exploration

Then out of the casa housing Ben, Tina, Marcel and Phaedra marches our stark naked two and a half year old great grandson, Zander. We break up in laughter as we watch him trudge to the neighboring casa to see Auntie Mary, Nora and Warren. He anticipates playing with them before breakfast.

We strain to see sloths in the treetops. These strange animals spend their time aloft, hanging from branches with a powerful grip aided by their long claws. I come out of our casa one afternoon and see Tim communing with a sloth hugging the tree only about six feet off the ground. Tim stands mesmerized, still as a ghost, with only his camera finger moving. I've never seen a sloth that close. That goofy sloth face with its beady black eyes and nose surrounded by light tan fur looks clownish as he stares at Tim. The sloth remains motionless, his normal habit.

The family laughter, the care and grace of the Costa Ricans who work at Buena Vista, the Mariposa Hotel dinner, the group photos will remain in our hearts with joy. A radical mix of different ages, passions, beliefs, values, hopes and dreams shape us.

Christmas Eve shines like the star of long ago. Fourteen of

us sit on our deck watching the water capture the subtle shades of pink, orange, yellow and gold as the sun disappears into the Pacific Ocean. The girls have prepared drinks appropriate for each age and platters of yummy snacks. As the tropical breeze settles we each share a highlight of Christmas's past.



A bit of a sour note enters the evening as the conversation veers off track into politics and the Iraq war. When combative moments meet flippant attitudes tensions rise until we step back from that brink.

We end the week with a family dinner at the Mariposa Hotel as we enjoy the camaraderie, good food, and more story telling.

Our mix of differences in ages, passions, beliefs, values, hopes and dreams give us moments of sheer joy and moments of radical

conflict. We appreciate the gift of being this family of fourteen....

- whether born into it
- adopted into it
- married into it.

Rodney later reflects, “A Christmas full of enchantment...a birthday to remember forever.”

With a world full of hunger, chaos, pain and violence, the magic of our Christmas time gives us pause. Some of the wise men in the Middle Ages said that if you pray only one prayer...make it a prayer of gratitude. Prayers of gratitude swell our hearts as we reflect on our lives, family, and opportunities to give of our goods and ourselves.

On this Christmas Rodney and I remember the ritual from UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold:

“For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes.”

Searching for Family 2009

In July 2009, son Ben and Rodney set out on a two-week genealogical expedition across Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Rodney expresses excitement as they drive south.

The first stop is Arkansas City. Two cemeteries here hold graves of the Wilson and Baldwin families. They turn west off Highway 27 into Memorial Lawn Cemetery to see the Baldwin side of Rodney’s family. They walk through the four quadrants and

locate Benjamin Baldwin's grave. With plowed fields on the north and wooded land on the south, the cemetery's grassy vista offers an oasis of comfort and solace.



In Parker Cemetery, east of town, they find Elmer Wilson, Rodney's grandfather's gravestone. They stand in respect at Elmer's grave and Ben's imagination swings to a tale he shares, "Your Great Grandfather David lost five children from 1870-1874. They ranged in age from a tiny baby to twenty-one years old. Elmer, your grandfather came along in 1877 and was their only living boy. Do you realize, without Elmer, you and I might not have happened?" This solemn thought silences them as the soft summer breeze whispers past.

In Guthrie their tour includes Rodney's boyhood paper route, the newspaper office, his elementary school, and the house where

they lived. A stop in the Oklahoma City courthouse discloses Elmer's marriage license to his second wife, Ethel which fills one more hole in Ben's hunt for genealogical bits and pieces.

Rodney tells tales of his time with his grandpas as they drive on to Boerne Texas. Rodney's family is known for retelling stories dozens of times. David Wilson (Rodney's great grandfather) has fascinated Ben since he began hunting family history. "David born in Kentucky in 1820, died in Mulhall, Oklahoma, in 1898. Your family always told the story that David rode with the Dalton Gang. However he shows up in Civil War records as a Union soldier, went to Ft. Scott, Kansas, and fought in the Border Wars. In 1863, he is assigned to Chaplain H. D. Fisher who was a 'gun blazing, out to free slaves' guy. Fisher sent slaves up the Missouri River in the Sam Getty Steamer with Orderly (David) Wilson in charge. The gang of Younger Brothers attack and kill most everyone on board. David lay by the cylinder timbers and the women covered him with their cooking utensils and clothing.⁴⁰ This saved his life. We now have the real story: he hid from gangsters—he didn't ride with them."

In Boerne, they visit Rodney's brother Vincent. Pulmonary fibrosis has made him fragile. They spend three days sitting on Vincent's patio talking quietly. Vincent has a woven single sling seat that fits his diminishing frame comfortably. After a tearful goodbye, Rodney and Ben head north.

40 *The Gun and the Gospel*, by Rev. H.D. Fisher, D.D.

On the drive back to Kansas City, Ben blurts out, "I've been doing a lot of research on your great grandfather David Wilson. As long as we have time, let's go see if we can find his children's graves in Harveyville."⁴¹

The two arrive in Harveyville and locate the small cemetery on the west side of town. Dappled sunlight and arching oak trees surround them. They walk up and down each row looking for Wilson gravestones, hollering back and forth, "What have you found?"

"Nothing."

In exasperation they leave the cemetery and drive down Main Street. They spot an open store, and Ben goes in and asks, "Do you know who manages the cemetery?"

The man points down the street, "No, go to the feed store and ask for the owner. He's the new mayor."

They track down the mayor, "The man who mows and manages the cemetery gave me a box with all the records of the graves on a spread sheet," he says.

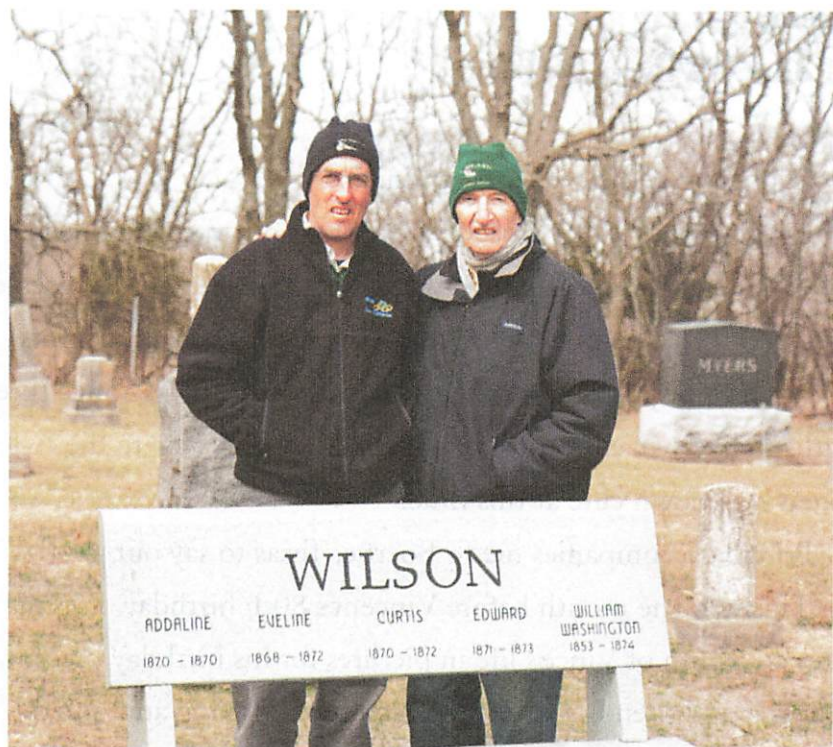
Ben looks through all the records and locates five Wilson names in a row. He checks the names next to these, and they return to the cemetery. A grassy plot, about twenty feet by twenty feet is empty, no stones. Five Wilson children are buried there.

As the guys drive home, their conversation centers on their experience in Harveyville. "I can't believe there were no markers on

41 Harveyville on the Santa F Trail, is a city in Wabaunsee County, Kansas, United States. The population was 267 at the 2000 census.

those graves. They need to be marked with some kind of stones,” Rodney says.

“We experienced how delightfully peaceful that cemetery is. What if we put a bench where visitors can sit, and enjoy that spot. We could have Wilson printed in larger letters, with the names of each of the five children and their dates under that,” Ben says.



Rodney, always quick to admire the practical way to do things says, “Great idea. You order it and have it put in the middle of the Wilson plot. I’ll pay for it.”

The next year Rodney and Tim drive to Harveyville to see the “Wilson” bench.

At home Rodney, regales me with stories from their trip. But I understand how gratified he really is when he says, “Having Ben so interested in looking up the stories of the Wilson family really delights me. Knowing more of my family’s history connects me to my past in a new way.”

Vincent

By Rodney Wilson 2010

“My brother died this past spring.

In November 2009 I receive a call from our younger brother Fred, “Vince has been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis; a disease that suffocates a person by filling the lungs with fiber. This limits the oxygen to his lungs. The doctor’s best estimate gives Vince three months to live...maximum five months. A terrible way to die. There is no known cure at this time.”

Priscilla accompanies me to Boerne, Texas to say our good-byes. This was one month before Vincent’s 80th birthday. Priscilla creates an album of Vince’s life in pictures for his birthday present. He loves it and spends most of the afternoon looking and quietly exclaiming over each picture.

Still strong enough, Vince enjoys a breakfast in town at Chile’s with Fred and me one morning. We laugh and share stories that we’ve told each other before – probably a million times.

We spend most of the day out on the large front porch enjoying all the memories that photos can elicit. Rosalie, Vince’s wife

of sixty-one years, has cleaned and refilled their many birdfeeders. Vince occupies a hammock style swing and we settle in to enjoy the day as best we can.

Time to leave. We have an early plane departure the next morning, Vince and I walk to the car with our arms around each other's shoulders. Then hugs, as only brothers know how.

As I step back the tears are flowing from Vince's eyes as he sees tears running down my cheeks. My farewell, "You take care little brother."

Four times we come together for the last time. Vince beats the odds and survives sixteen long months, dying March 24, 2010.

A long plastic tube tethers Vincent to his oxygen tank when we return to Texas for our second visit. His communication skills are diminishing slowly.

Our daughter, Mary accompanies me on this trip. We spend time on their porch – Vincent's favorite spot. Son, Ben and his wife, Tina joined us in Boerne for a couple of days.



He can still tease Mary, “Watch out, don’t step on my oxygen tube.”

It is Labor Day weekend, Vincent enjoys the hubbub of this second “goodbye” and manages to cheer the rest of us with his stories as he struggles to breath. He voices some discomfort, ‘I am chilly most of the time now.’ When we return home, I mail him a warm polartec jacket.”



Vincent, Rodney and Fred.

Closure of the Day July 2010

In July 2010, a year before his death, Rodney and I attend Bill Tammeus's annual writing week at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. Our writing buddy, Kaze Gadway, joins us. The week focuses on the theme "Death and Its Mysteries." This focus on death gives us the opportunity to think through many things that later become helpful. The three of us talk about what we hope for our end of life, where we plan to live, management of pain, and cremation.

Rodney writes a powerful story that we use to anchor his memorial service.

Closure of the day – By Rodney Wilson

Three bugle notes caught my attention "C C E".

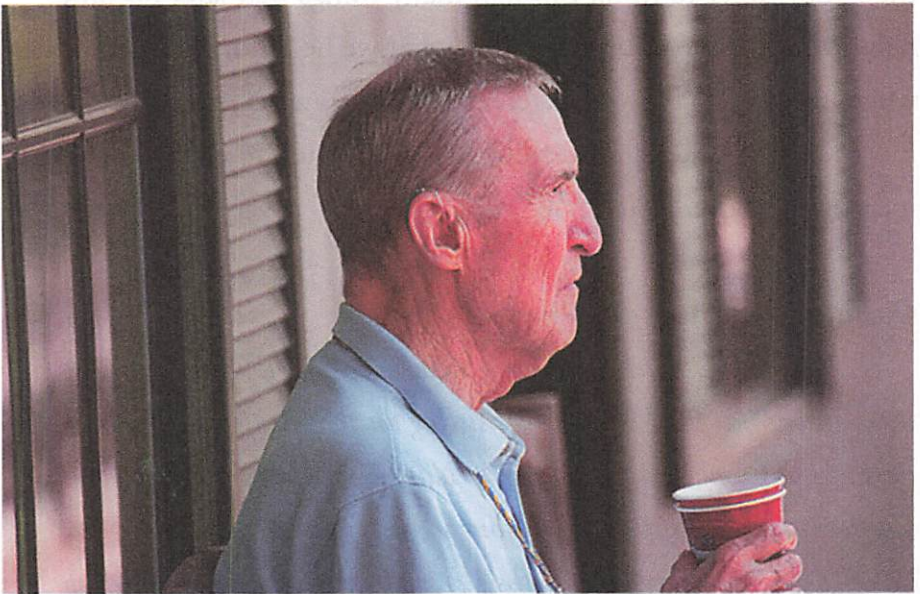
It was just 9 PM and I was sitting on the barrack steps. The barracks of Company 332 5/44 US Navy Boot Camp San Diego, California will be my home for four weeks. How proud I felt to be a sailor. At 17 years and 6 months old a whole new world opened up to and for me. In a short time closure of a passed period of my life had started. More notes, "C E G". And then 16 additional finished the piece. Taps had just sounded over the entire base. Lights out. Since Civil War days Taps ordered that it was time for all Lights out – Closure of the Day. 24 notes said it all

"Day is done, gone the sun, From the hills, from the lake, From the sky. All is well, safely rest, God is nigh."

I suppose I had listened to Taps a number of times, probably at the

Memorial Day observances in Guthrie, Oklahoma where I grew up. I had never really heard it until that night at the Navy Base. I discovered that closure is important in many arenas.

When the time comes, I'm going to ask my friend Wayne Bates, who plays trumpet, to sound Taps at my memorial service as a closure of my life.



EPILOGUE

Accept Life's Givens

The Final Journey

The grieving person has to make sense of the journey. I watched Rodney slow down for five or six years, but in spite of that his death shrouds me in a cloak of numbness. He lived life totally until he died, but he began to slow down by his late 70's.

It all began in 2005 when he said, "I can't participate in village projects anymore. My hearing is too bad, I'm afraid I wouldn't understand what people are saying." Later in the fall of that year he displayed a strange period of mental confusion.

The first memorable moment of alarm occurred on a hot June day in 2006. Rodney went to work at the Village Church Food Pantry and helped unload a truck. Suddenly a couple of men noticed him wandering around aimlessly. They took him home after they watched him fumbling with his cell phone trying to get in touch with me.

When they asked him where he lives, he couldn't say. They phone the church to find his address.

His co-worker, Bill drives him home. I meet them at the door

and alarm bells ring in my head, but gratitude follows as I remember son Ben happens to be at our house. We call Dr. Cohen who tries to talk with Rodney on the phone. Rodney's speech makes no sense.

Ben and I take him to the Emergency Room at Menorah Hospital where he receives a CT Scan, a lung x-ray, and blood tests. Nothing gives any indication of being wrong except some dehydration. He has lived a lifetime of low blood pressure so the erratic blood pressure readings push me into panic. Several hours of Rodney's total confusion crumbles my world uncontrollably.

Several other episodes of confusion occur during the summer. Times of fuzzy speech, numbness in his leg, arm and jaw plus capricious blood pressure readings scare us both.

One day in early September he walks the four blocks to the church by himself and I meet him there. We stand in the sunny church parking lot for a half-hour waiting for our food at the church bar-b-que picnic. Before we get our plates he pauses, "I am tired. I need to sit down."

He returns about the time I have our two plates and he carries them back to the table while I go for dessert. About halfway through the meal he feels fuzzyheaded. We sit there a few more minutes, and then walk to my car. Total confusion hasn't hit, but he recognizes he needs to go to bed. During the next couple of hours his agitation increases. This spell lasts about three hours, and his blood pressure hits 193/104, the highest it has ever been.

Through the fall, he experiences other episodes of confusion,

erratic blood pressure, disconnected speech, and the struggle to walk.

He often says, "This is crazy," as he recognizes something wrong.

Dr. Cohen continues to monitor him and look for the cause of these episodes. The only assumption remains TIAs.⁴²

Later that fall we connect with Dr. Irene Bettinger, a neurologist at St. Luke's Hospital. Our absolute trust with her builds as we continue our conversations over several visits. She sends a complete report to Dr. Cohen.

"This nearly 80-year-old man was seen regarding episodic confusion over the last 20 months, raising the question of TIA or stroke. I do not think he is having TIA or stroke problems, nor is he having seizures. He has a history of migraines with visual auras.⁴³ Whether there is a question between the prior migraine history and the episodes of confusion in the last two years, I cannot say for certain. But it is a possibility.

I am leaning toward a conclusion that leaves recurring spells of dysphasia⁴⁴, sometimes with true confusion, and the couple of spells with a migrating sensory disturbance are manifestations of migraine auras without the actual headache. There has been a progressive loss of function with regards to speech, or a progressive spread of sensory disturbance."

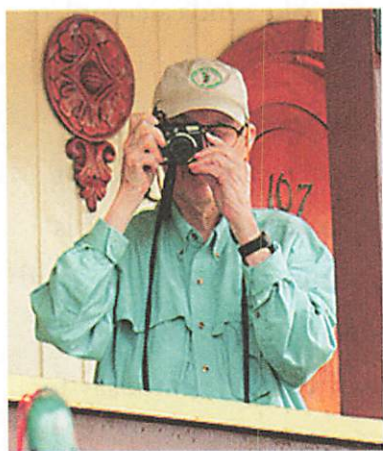
42 A TIA, or Transient Ischemic Attack, is a "mini-stroke" and should be taken very seriously.

43 "Migraine with aura" is a relatively new name for the less common type of migraine headache. Aura refers to feelings and symptoms you notice shortly before the headache begins." WebMD

44 "Dysphasia: One in a group of speech disorders in which there is impairment of the power of expression by speech." Internet Free Dictionary

Then mysteriously over the next few years, Rodney generates enough energy to travel three times to South America. Flabbergasted and thankful, we accept this reality and help him be careful in conserving his energy (taking naps and such) on these adventures.

Ben and Tina accompany Rodney and me to the Amazon River in 2008, then to look for birds in Ecuador in 2009 and



to Venezuela in February, 2010.

Rodney often stays at camp or on the ship instead of engaging in the more rigorous activities. But just going on a trip requires energy. His mode of operating slows down, but he travels with no complaints.

Our daughter, Mary, not a birding person, asks to go to Venezuela with us, "I want to take a trip with my Daddy." Who would have known? Venezuela becomes Rodney's last journey out of the country.

The last weekend before his death Ben, Tina, Mary, Nora and Warren accompany us to visit his brother, Fred in Boerne Texas.

Ben and I spend a day bird watching on a Reserve near Boerne. Rodney and the others “hang out” in town.

The last evening before his death he and I attend a play, the Rock Opera Tommy, at Kansas City’s Metropolitan Ensemble Theater. We both enjoy the evening and surprisingly like the rock music in the play.

Nevertheless, Rodney’s death catches me off guard. He survived some difficulties during the first years of the century but then engaged in life with his usual passion. So I am not expecting the sudden collapse on June 4, 2011.

I often think of Rodney’s favorite quote, from the movie Breaker Morant,

“Live every day as if it is your last and one day you will be right.”



Rodney's Death⁴⁵ 2011

Fifty-eight years, eight months and twenty-one days after that first, "I do" Rodney drops to the floor with a "catastrophic brain hemorrhage."

Our daughter, Mary had purchased a suite at the Kauffman Stadium for the Royals June 4th baseball game with the Minnesota Braves.

At the last minute Rodney decides to stay home and watch the game on TV saying, "I don't want to walk that far in the parking lot." He kisses Mary and me goodbye and admonishes us with his usual advice, "Watch out driving home. Remember all those guys have been drinking beer all evening."

These are his last words.

Mid-point in the game, I try to call him. He loves to have me check in when I am out. No answer, but this isn't too odd. He may be on the phone, or just can't hear it. Later in the evening, I phone again. No answer. Worst-case scenarios creep into my mind and I ask Mary to come in with me when she takes me home.

We arrive home. The lights and TV are on in the den. The chair stands empty.

We find Rodney's body on the floor by his desk. Irrationality takes over my mind and body as scenes of him asleep rustle through

⁴⁵ This story appears in Kaze Gadway and my book, *Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia*.

the air. I scramble to the floor, begging him to wake up. I refuse to see the odd angles his arms and hands are twisted. I call his name. Mary calls 911. I go into shock and stay disconnected from reality. I age twenty years in those few minutes.

Six or seven medics fill the room. They check all the signs their training requires. No response comes from Rodney. They place him on a gurney, strap him down and head for the door. I obey one of the medics and ride in the ambulance; Mary follows to KU Med Center, the closest trauma center.

A CT scan of Rodney's brain shows a white blob has filled about 95% of his brain. I strain to find any excuse to disbelieve what I see. The night duty neuro-surgeon states, "Given Rodney's age and the extent of the bleeding, there isn't anything to be done."

They insert a breathing tube in an attempt to "keep him alive" until his sons arrive.

My irrational thinking continues to move through my numbness.

About midnight Mary and I follow Rodney's gurney to the sixth floor to the TEVA Neuroscience wing of Intensive Care. Complete irony! The suite she purchased at the ballgame was for the TEVA Neuroscience auction.

Mary finally goes home to her kids and I spend a wild, sleepless night in a lounge chair in his room.

Over and over, I go to his bed and in a shaky, disbelieving voice utter, "I love you." I gently touch him and check the monitors. Never a flicker of response, only little involuntary twitches.

Morning finally comes. Son Ben races toward us from Minnesota. My sister arrives. I talk to folks at the church. The nurses tippy-toe around us. Their conversation remains cautious even after they get the idea that we know how to spell the word “death.”

While I am in no way prepared for the reality of Rodney’s death, several things are keeping me from total collapse. The previous summer the two of us and Kaze spent a week at Ghost Ranch, NM. *Death and Its Mysteries*, the theme for the week, triggered much conversation. Now that writing and talking about death are like an iron brace holding me upright.

Ben arrives about noon. He tells a crazy story of the hospital’s naming of trauma patients who come into ER. Trauma patients assigned a country name makes them impossible to find. Rodney’s computer listing as “O.J. Taiwan” frustrates Ben when he arrives. A nurse finally hears the conversation at the desk and rescues him.

We spend the day talking to Rodney, never knowing if he can hear. No sign of “life” other than the involuntary twitches and the numbers shifting on his monitors.

About mid-afternoon the nurse says, “I expect his heart rate and blood pressure to spike and then plummet.”

This doesn’t register in my mind so I am shocked when it rapidly happens. We ask for the removal of the breathing tube and monitors so my daughter’s two kids can come and say a final goodbye.

My nephew, Mike brings Mary’s children, Nora and Warren to Rodney’s room. They sob, painful goodbyes.

When Rodney's heart stops, his flesh color oozes away to a pale gray. I look up at the clock, 8:33pm. The doctor arrives and declares the death at 8:45pm, June 5, 2011. I don't argue. I steel myself to maintain a calm demeanor.

Protocol takes over. The hospital calls the Cremation Center. I remain in a state of numb shock.

During Rodney's Memorial Service, June 11, grandson, Jeff walks to the pulpit and reads Rodney's story. "Closure of the Day." I scarcely breathe. No one has a dry eye while Wayne plays Taps.

Gratitude mixes with my denial. We lived a wonderful life with more adventures than most folks ever experience. Rodney didn't suffer a long protracted illness ... in the hospital less than twenty-four hours. I have unbelievable support from family, friends and church community.

Throughout his life Rodney trusted his intuitions time and again: intrigue with a postcard, saying "yes" to the Ecumenical Institute, participating in the Oombulgurri Consult, responding to that Rotary sign in India, flying to Scotland to be with Rex Cook as he died. Now, I have to say "yes" for this new reality.

If we hadn't talked about death, I couldn't imagine any of this. For a long time we planned for our ashes (cremation was always part of the equation) to be in the cemetery in Arkansas City with my parents. But all the plastic flowers in that cemetery bothered us. We decided we wanted our ashes in the Memorial Garden at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village with a simple stone stating

name and dates. That seemed right when we made the decision and certainly seems right now.

We decided to keep some of the ashes to take to Blue Heaven on Hatteras Island. A neighbor, Mary and I created a gravestone of shells that included Rodney's iron World War II marker.



Before his death, we made all the necessary arrangements... wills, conversation with the Cremation Center, told the kids where things are, planned to move to a retirement apartment, began to get rid of "stuff."

What we left out was conversation about what we expect for ourselves if we are the one left. We did laugh and say Rodney shouldn't be the one left behind... he would starve to death. You can only live so long on peanut butter and mayonnaise sandwiches.

With him gone, so much has changed. I knew my identity before. I was Mrs. Rodney Wilson, happily married, member of a team. That identity disappeared.

Without my life-long partner I am shaping a new identity and

a new name; I am now Priscilla H Wilson, mother, grandmother, great grandmother and I live alone. I am living proof that you can continue to live without your soul mate, best friend, and husband. Grief promises to stay with me, but gratefulness penetrates my being as my new life fills with different kinds of blessings.

I often think about how Rodney would have appreciated the move to Claridge Court Retirement living. We chose that destination for the rest of our life in January, 2010. Rodney's death, June 5, 2011. Apartment purchase at Claridge Court finalized January 2012.

I know he would have loved being here if he was still perking at full tilt. But he was tired of being at half-mast and ready to go.

Words About Death

By Kaze Gadway

We sat on the couch at the Wilson's home in the Outer Banks. I asked Rodney if he had thought about his death. In a very matter of fact tone, he said, "Yes."

He continued, "I have no regrets about my life. When I was 17, I wasn't afraid of death. I never believed that I could die. Now I know I have nothing to worry about. One thing I don't want Priscilla to get Alzheimer. I don't want to see her that way. And I don't want to get Alzheimer's and have Priscilla take care of me. Other than that, I am not worried."

“The best thing that ever happened to me was Priscilla. How she put up with me all these years I will never know. I thank God that she has been in my life.”

“I’m not worried about my children. I’m proud of them all. I’m surprised at the way they turned out. When they were younger I wondered if I was doing things right because I didn’t know. I am so glad that I never tried to push them into what I wanted for them.”

“Tim is the adventurer. He has always gone his own way and he found out by himself what he was best at. He takes more risks and does more new things than any of us. Many men much older than he still don’t love their work. Tim wakes up in the morning and loves what he is doing. Not many can say that.”

“Ben surprised me by turning out to be the responsible one. He went from job to job for so long. And when he found what he liked to do on the computer, he threw himself into it and works hard at it. He is a good husband and father. He also throws himself into his raptors and photographs. He likes to help.”

“Ben and I searching headstones for Wilson ancestors once was one of my proudest moments.”

“Mary has always been special to me. There is nothing that I would not do for Mary. I built her a dollhouse once. Ever since she came to us, she has been my special Mary. I trust her in everything.”

“Now, my grandchildren and great grandchildren bring me nothing but joy. They are going to turn out all right too.”

These are words said to me by Rodney this past year. I noted

some of it down because I wanted to relay them to his family. I just didn't think it would be at his funeral.

My Reflection: Through the Years

Sixty-one years ago my Mother and I rode the Santa Fe Chief to Chicago to shop for my trousseau.⁴⁶ This trip, three months before my marriage to Rodney Eugene Wilson preceded our wedding on October 26, 1952.

My mother and I found shopping excursions in Wichita and Arkansas City frustrating. Neither city seemed to have anything either one of us liked.

My trousseau, wedding dress, "going away" suit and accessories remain her determined focus. Much more interesting to me will be the walks with Rodney.

The memories of evening walks in Grant Park filled with the fragrance of the purples, and pinks of the cleome spider flowers. Watching Buckingham Fountain's color and light show spurt water high toward the sky mesmerized us. Basking in the glorious breeze off Lake Michigan seems like yesterday.

Rodney's loves his job with the Santa Fe Railroad as secretary for the Superintendent of Transportation in the Railway Exchange Building on Michigan Avenue. Plus the size and congestion of Chicago has become manageable.

⁴⁶ The personal outfit of a bride; clothes and accessories and linens.

I look forward to spending as much of my Chicago time with him as possible. My Mother focused on success in our shopping.

An evening at the Chez Paree Night Club⁴⁷ provided magical moments for us. We couldn't afford that treat, but my Mother could. I have no memory of program or music; there must have been some. We never returned to the Chez Paree during the many years we lived in the Chicago area, but we cherished the memory of that evening.



47 The Chez Paree was a Chicago nightclub known for its glamorous atmosphere, elaborate dance numbers, and top entertainers.

Grief

July 9, 2011

“Real grief is not healed by time. . . If time does anything, it deepens our grief. The longer we live, the more fully we become aware of who he was for us, and the more intimately we experience what his love meant for us. Real, deep love is, as you know, very unobtrusive, seemingly easy and obvious, and so present that we take it for granted. Therefore, it is often only in retrospect — or better, in memory—that we fully realize its power and depth. Yes, indeed, love often makes itself visible in pain.”

— Henri Nouwen

“At first this is frightening. Grief deepening? Am I never going to feel better?”

So much of the meaning of our loved one’s life becomes distilled, sifted through memory and through experience after his or her death. New insights awaken, new appreciations, and with these come new birth pangs, and new yearning that our beloved was still with us.

But this ongoing process also promises that, in a way, loved ones will never leave us, that their lives will continue to nourish and, yes, change us—that they will, indeed, be with us always in the mutual interdependence of love.”

— A page from: *Healing After Loss, Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief* Martha Whitmore Hickman

ADDENDUM

Rodney Wilson's Family

BIRTHS

Wife: Priscilla Anne Hutchinson

March 22 1931

Children:

Benjamin Hobart Wilson

born June 1954

Timothy Guy Wilson

born Sept, 1956

Mary Helyn Wilson Van Ryzin

born Sept. 10 1963

Grandchildren:

Marcel Patrick Wilson

born February 1978

Jeffrey Dwight Wilson

born April 1981

Nora Elizabeth Van Ryzin

born June 1995

Warren Wilson Van Ryzin

born July 1998

Great Grandchildren:

Alexander Ryan Wilson

born March 2004

Isabelle Josephine Wilson

born March 2008

Aurora Reese Wilson

born April 2009

Teegan Guse Wilson

born February 2012

Jarvis Hobart Wilson

born May 2014

MARRIAGES

Rodney and Priscilla Anne Hutchinson

October 1952

Ben and Christine Guse

January 1978

Marcel and Phaedra

July 1999

Jeff and Christy

October 2008

Mary and Steve Van Ryzin

1987



Priscilla and Rodney Wilson



Ben and Tina Wilson



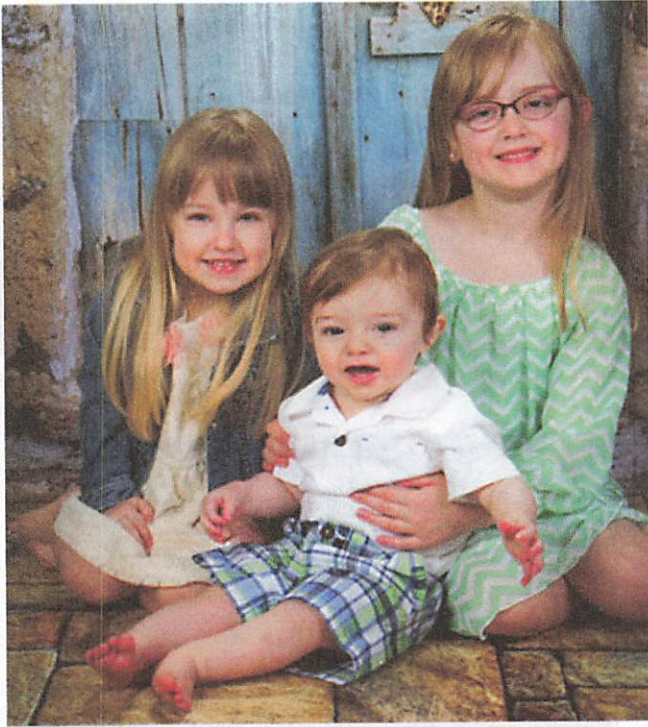
Marcel and Phaedra Wilson



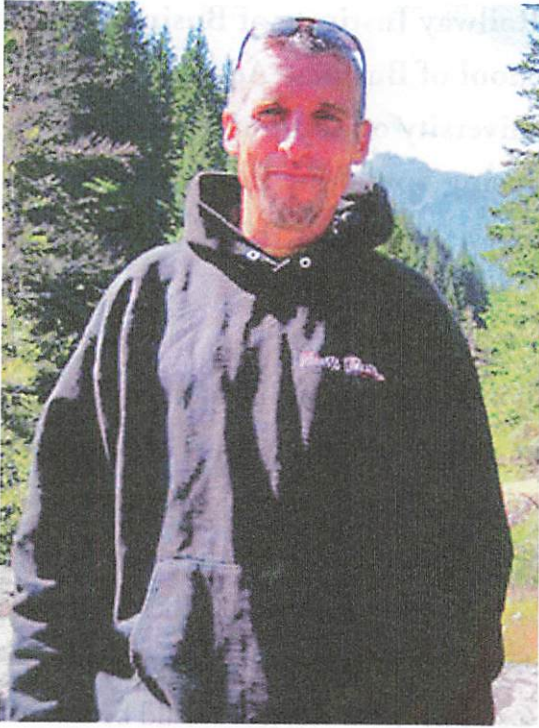
Alexander and Isabelle Wilson



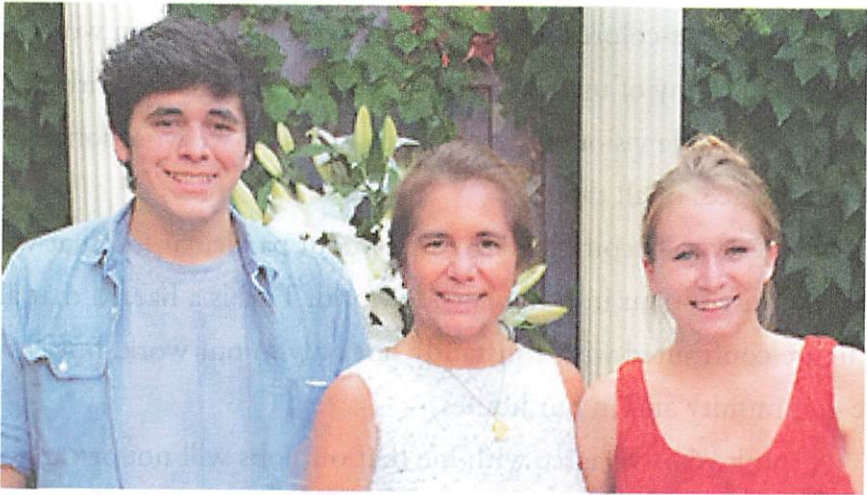
Jeffrey and Christy Wilson



Teegan, Jarvis, and Aurora Wilson



Tim Wilson



Warren, Mary, Nora Van Ryzin

**Santa Fe Railway Institute of Business Economics
School of Business Administration
University of Southern California
Closing Speech by Rodney Wilson
August, 1963**

I am quite honored to talk with you briefly this evening about our six weeks here at the Santa Fe Institute of Business Economics.

I'll try to convey to a small degree our reaction to the classes.

We have talked a great deal about the past, the present and the future. It is amazing how fast each one of these categories become realities. A little more than six weeks ago school was in the future – and now all of a sudden it's history. It would be rather difficult to know just how each one of us entered the course. Some of us, no doubt, wore rose-colored glasses, probably some of us even wore dark lenses. Many of us I'm sure wore microscopic glasses with not near as much side vision as we thought. Probably we wore some varying degrees of all three.

It is easy to become so engrossed in our particular job that we don't venture too far into the outside world. This is a hazard that all of us are confronted with constantly not only in our work, but in the community and in our homes.

I think you will agree with me that our jobs will not or cannot be the same when we get back. For several reasons: (1) the fellows handling the work will not have done everything just exactly the

way you and I would have, (2) but mainly because we've simply got new insights of this old world we live in. We are not going to see our job through the same pair of glasses.

I don't possibly see how we can think the way we have in the past. I think there are times when we would go back to the "good ole days."

A friend of mine once explained to me about the past or possibly described it with a better word, and I've never forgotten it. We were talking one evening about wishing things were like they used to be and he said, "Rodney, probably the best time anyone ever had it so good was the few months just before he was born. You were warm, well fed, comfortable and not a thing to worry about. And then you were born and the first fellow you met gave you a kick in the pants and you were suddenly aware that there were other things around you... "out there."

I think that is what happened here this last six weeks. We've suddenly become aware that there is a lot going on in this world we live in. In our society, as we know too well, things are not the same as they were 2,000, 200 or even 20 years ago. If we are to have any understanding of its nature we have to come to some kind of realistic understanding of our world. Many of our concepts of the realities of our world are much more highly colored and informed by our romantic traditions that are fed into our upbringing than they are by what really exists out there where we live. I think I could further illustrate this through the use of a parable I once read. I'd like to read it to you.

“If fish could talk, they probably would have no word for water and yet water is a tremendously important element in the lives of fish. But being born in to it, taking it constantly into their bodies and breathing it out again, they are never able to step back and look at it. Fish probably would be the most unlikely creatures to understand much about the nature of water.

Human beings are not quite so limited in their ability to transcend, to stand apart from their own existence and look at it. But they are still seriously subjected to the limitations of being immersed in the water of their culture. Imagine a community of fish in a pond which is mildly polluted and which has rather serious effects in the lives of the fish. Things go from bad to worse, and the fish call a conference. They appoint a committee to study the situation and find out what is wrong, and to make recommendations for improving it. The committee calls in outside experts who live within the same pond to help them study the situation. They look at the juvenile delinquency, the quarrelling families, the rising cost of living, and they conclude that the trouble is that the fish are all selfish and irritable. After careful consideration the solution to the problem is that fish should become unselfish and calm and peaceable. So they enlist all the channels of public communication, the processes of education and the institutions of religion to promote the virtues of unselfishness and calmness and peacefulness in the fish community.

All of this helps a little bit, but not much. All of the external signs of fish well being continue to decline. Why? Because it has not

occurred to any of the fish that a part of the trouble, not all, but a part of it, might be the nature of the water in which they live.”

Now don't try to make an allegory; this is a parable and it is intended to make one point. If you try to make an allegory out of it, you will find it doesn't hold water, if you'll pardon the expression.

If we can't have any conception of the water we live in how can we make an effective contribution to a well rounded society. I think, against very heavy odds, these gentlemen (the faculty) have taken us out of the water and in expert fashion planted us on good solid ground. This brings us to tonight.

We mentioned glasses – rose colored, dark, and I think now we have a pair with telescopic lens with a wide vision. As Dr. Robb, one of the professors at the University says, “Who is your optometrist?”

What kind of glasses will we be wearing as we find ourselves back in the water tomorrow?

Remembering Rod

Rod Wilson

Rodney to Priscilla.

Quiet strength, Iron resolve.

Humble....not seeking the limelight.

Present.

When our global initiatives stretched us beyond comfort,

It was good to know that Rod was there.

Rotary recognized that as well.

Rod was a Rotary man, which means he was a

Serving man.

Strong example to us,

To his fine children.

A husband who encouraged Priscilla to spread her wings,

Fly the coup from time to time,

And to come home to dinner.

We and the world are made stronger by

Rod's having been here.

Quiet man,

Serving man,

We will miss you.

Elise Packard

June 8, 2011

“Going a Round with Rodney”

Jim Troxel

“One of my regrets is that I did not spend as much time with my friend, Rodney Wilson, as I would have liked. The few times we did spend together were some of my most cherished.

We knew each other from the late 1960’s through the work of the Ecumenical Institute - I as a young staff and he as a board member, “guardian.” Our paths crossed from time to time for the next twenty years or so and in different places around the world.

It wasn’t until the late 1980’s and early 1990’s that I came to know Rodney in a most treasured manner. Again the details are blurry but the location was Belgium.

During 1988 the ICA-International held two or three events in Brussels which Rodney and I attended together for at least one, maybe two of them. These occasions were meetings where ICAI was thinking through some thorny issues of re-inventing itself to provide a base of global connectedness.

Rodney and I soon discovered that we shared a similar disdain for long meetings. We would find it compulsory to take our leave of the momentous deliberations underway and remove ourselves to the community plaza where there was a local tavern that served Belgium’s famous brew, Stella Artois. We would sit outside on the square and enjoy people watching and discussing the news of the day and other heady topics. Other comrades in collaborative misery, most notably, Dick Seacord, frequently joined us.

The Stellas would be served in large slender coned glasses with its logo prominently displayed. It was Rodney's duty each day to utter his famous mantra, "The first round's on me," to which I can report no one ever objected. His logic, he shared with me, was that people tended to forget who ordered what in later rounds and some poor schmuck would be stuck with the tab. While regrettably true, the real reason for Rodney's generosity was that since the rest of us were usually cash-strapped staff members, no one could afford any other rounds anyway.

Besides, the flasks of the Stellas lasted Well, they lasted a lifetime, to be honest. I cannot tell you one single world problem we resolved, not one replication of a human development project we initiated, not one financial conundrum we untangled, but I can tell you those conversations at dusk were some of the most wonder-filled moments of my life. We just simply talked. A bunch of guys shooting the breeze and wondering what was the meaning of it all. They were more like a tonic than an ale; a chance to commiserate, blow off some steam, and laugh at our attachments to the old order passing away. Invariably, we would discuss why the train system in the US couldn't be more like that in Europe, a topic Rodney was well equipped to indulge.

You can't go to Belgium without making the pilgrimage to Brugge, a town preserved in the Middle Ages halfway to the English Channel. So the body in residence made its trek on the train and Rodney and I discovered that while we both enjoyed Brugge, we

each had been there enough to not care too much for staring at the tedious process of lace-making one more time. So, we found the best people-watching, outdoor-seating tavern we could find, situated ourselves comfortably, and imbibed on the national lager for the duration. It was during this one visit that Rodney took a photo of me which to this day remains one of my all-time favorite portraits.

Time moves on and people go and do the things they feel compelled they must. But for a brief moment of history, two lives overlapped that made all the difference in the world. My feeble attempts to resurrect those moments have been unsuccessful. My memory of the details is long gone, but the experience has remained intact in my being to this day.

If I were to aggregate all my times, experiences and memories of Rodney and summarize them into one word it would be “Loyalty.” Rodney was loyal to his church, the Rotary Club, the EI/ICA, Santa Fe, and, of course, his family and to his friends. If he found someone with whom he enjoyed their particular company, he would do whatever he could to make that person feel welcome, honored and treasured. He would support whatever efforts he himself had established with a personal connection.

Rodney tended to shy away from center stage, feeling more comfortable behind the scenes. He liked that, I think, not because he wasn't good at being in the limelight. Indeed, when those occasions were thrust upon him, he performed magnificently. Rather, he just enjoyed sharing the spotlight with those whom he genuinely

thought deserved it more than he. He never seemed to realize that it was his supportive nature that propelled others around him to greatness.

You could depend on Rodney. He was there for you and you knew it. And you could rely on his steadfastness as surely as if there was a rock to stand on. He encouraged you to be your best.

Rodney was the consummate team player. Okay, maybe he took off every now and then to join others and me for a local brew. Rodney, though, simply redefined what team he was on for the moment.

We used to have a saying at the institute that went something like, “Always say ‘Yes’.” That meant that whenever a colleague asked for your assistance, your first response was to be always “yes.” Rodney was the personification of that principle.

We had another saying that I’m sure was modeled after Rodney: “Whatever it takes.” He did whatever it took whenever it became necessary.

History is going to miss Rodney’s physical presence in this world. But his spirit lives within me, I know, and will forever. I’m just as sure it lives within countless others he touched around the world. Rodney served as a premier example of service to humankind – not in the abstract, but in the concrete – to specific people, to specific projects, to specific organizations. His care for the world was “grounded” in the particular. He wrote no treatises, he authored no philosophy. He waxed eloquent on only those things that mattered to him in the here and now.

He affirmed life and in his affirmation of life, he affirmed that which gives all beings life, the Ground of all Being. And It, and all who knew him, return the favor.

Thank you, Rodney, for your Presence in my life and in all those you encountered. I hope St. Peter enjoys the First Round!

An Extraordinary Rotarian

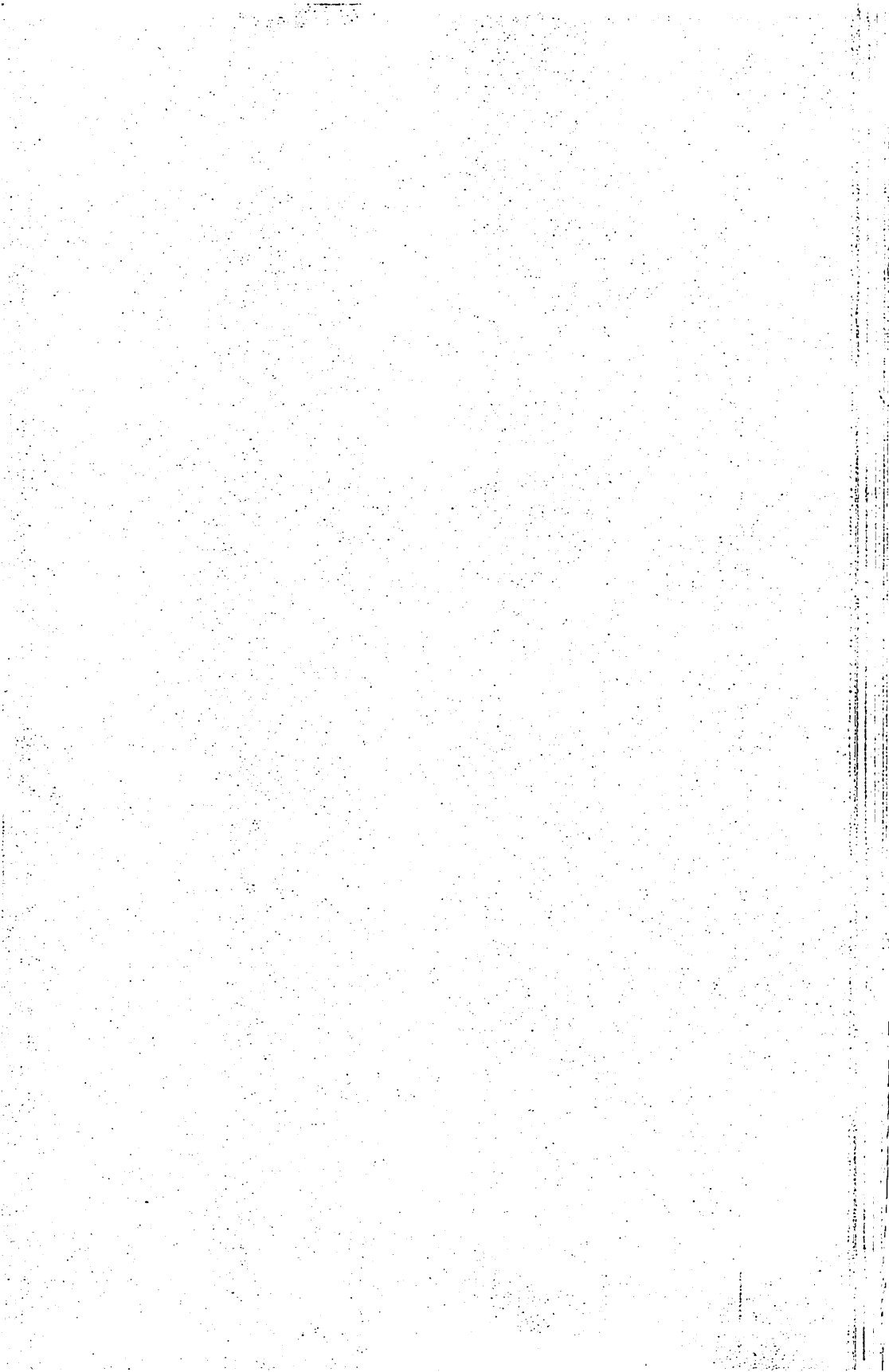
Rod Wilson was a man of greatness who never aspired to greatness. As a Rotarian he received the two highest awards of the Rotary International Foundation, the Citation for Meritorious Service (1991) and the Distinguished Service Award (1997). In 1994 he received one of the earliest Service Above Self awards, the highest honor that Rotary International awards to an individual Rotarian. He was always surprised by these awards, because he was in Rotary to help people in poverty which "all of us want to do, and I just found out how to do it."

Rod learned the procedures for Rotary Matching Grants and Humanitarian Grants. He did projects in Mexico, Portugal, Ghana, and Jamaica ranging from water supply, health clinics, immunizations, and hospital surgery rooms. Along the way he taught the Shawnee Mission Rotary Club and District 5710 "how to do it" and floods of projects have been coming ever since. Rod served RI as a grant evaluator and for two years he was a grant consultant to the TRF Trustees. Rod was one of the "candles" on the "birthday cake" for the Rotary Foundation's 75th Anniversary. Rod thought and did Rotary. He lived Rotary. His was a legacy of expansion--expanded service, expanded goodwill, and expanded love, hope, and peace. *Vaya con Dios, Senor Rod.*

FRED KREBS
SHAWNEE MISSION ROTARY

Rod's Country List

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Austria | 1988 |
| Australia | 1975 |
| Belgium | 1985/89 |
| Canada | 1974 |
| Belize | 1996 |
| Botswana | 2002 |
| Costa Rica | 1998/99, 2004 |
| Dom Republic | 1993-95 |
| Ecuador | 2009 |
| Egypt | 1970/72/79/85 |
| England | 1970/72/77 |
| Ethiopia | 1972 |
| France | 1970/72 |
| Germany | 1988 |
| Ghana | 1995 |
| Greece | 1970/72 |
| Guam | 1972/73 |
| Guatemala | 1992 |
| Haiti | 1997 |
| Hong Kong | 1970/73 |
| Hungary | 1988 |
| India | 1970/84 |
| Israel | 1985 |
| Italy | 1970/72 |
| Japan | 1970/73 |
| Jamaica | 1992/94 |
| Kenya | 1979, 2000 |
| Korea | 1977 |
| Malaysia | 2000 |
| Marshall Islands | 1972/73/74/77 |
| Mexico | 1988/89/90/91/92/93 |
| Netherlands | 1972 |
| Nigeria | 1979 |
| Phillipines | 1945/1976 |
| Portugal | 1972/86/87/88/89 |
| Scotland | 1989/94/95 |
| Singapore | 1974, 2000 |
| South Africa | 2002 |
| Spain | 1972/86 |
| Switzerland | 1972 |
| Taiwan | 1973 |
| Thailand | 1970 |
| Truk Islands | 1973/74 |
| Zambia | 1979 |
| Zimbabwe | 2002 |
| Venezuela | 2010 |



I have no idea how many days we stayed in Chicago...or what hotel Mother and I enjoyed. Rodney had a gift of remembering details. Everyone in our family teases me now that most of our memories disappeared when he died. For some reason, his mind stored the minutest details of what, when, how and probably why. Maybe he was just smarter than the rest of us...or paid more attention to what was happening.

Now, some days go by in a swirl, other times they drag along. Evenings are the hardest. Through the years, even when one of us traveled, I always anticipated time to share our experiences.

As I wrote this book, I set my sights on not painting Rodney as a saint. He would not want to be considered one. Some times we irritated, frustrated or disappointed each other, but we realized we could move past those moments. We learned to say, "I love you anyway."

With trial and error, we discovered how to work as a team, to think in sync, to appreciate the foibles of the other and figure out how our lives meshed.

We each stated at one time or another that "Rodney (Priscilla) was the best thing that every happened to me."

I can only pray a prayer of gratitude that we had the privilege of living a life of deep love.

Thank you for letting me share his story with you.

2011 Christmas Preparation

“Grief is like a roller coaster ride,” says one of the many books I have piled on our bed. Such a helpful line as the holidays approach. The most unexpected things send the cart I’m riding tumbling in a downward swoop.

Thanksgiving just happened and Christmas approaches with racetrack speed. How do I celebrate the holidays differently this year?

Our first year of marriage we obediently ate Christmas dinner twice. Rodney and my parents lived three blocks apart. Both households wanted us to be part of their festivities. We feasted twice. Too painful! We changed course the next year. Christmas day dinner became an every other year event. One year with Wilsons, next year with Hutchinsons, etc.

That started fifty-nine years ago. The holidays happen without Rodney now.

The thought of decorating leads into a puzzle. Trees tie into so many memories. For years Rodney and I took the children to Henry’s Garden Shop to choose as big a tree as possible. Chatting with Henry, we warmed our hands over the fire roaring in a large metal barrel. Perennially we argued about the size of the tree. I wanted bigger...Rodney always pushed for smaller.

I began collecting Nativity Sets years ago. A house full of Nativity signals the Holy time of Christmas.

This year I'll chose the ones most connected to special memories with Rodney.

The large straw Nativity from Portugal caused a lot of conversation when I bought it. Purchased when we were dead tired after leading a three-week Rotary Work camp in the villages of the Montemuro Mountains, Rodney worried, "How will you get this thing home?" I've usually trusted the shipping processes so off it goes to Kansas City.



Buying the pottery set in Mexico worried even me. But it has graced the mantel in front of his great grandparents portraits for many years now.

There are dozens of smaller sets. Many of these will probably stay in their summer home in the attic this year. Maybe next year they all can celebrate with us.

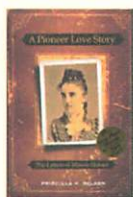
We will gather as a family and shape new patterns. While acknowledging our grief, we will praise God for the gifts of love and memories of past years. Healing will slowly have its way. We will invent fresh ways of praying, sharing what we have with others and honoring the sacred. New understandings of celebrating Christmas will emerge.



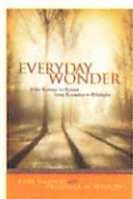
Priscilla H. Wilson grew up in Arkansas City, KS and earned a BA in Education from the University of Oklahoma. She enjoyed fifty-nine years of marriage to Rodney Wilson before he died in June, 2011. They have three children,

four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She was one of the founders of TeamTech, Inc., a Kansas City-based strategic consulting, facilitation and training firm. Priscilla served the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) as a program designer, curriculum creator and trainer for leaders and facilitators.

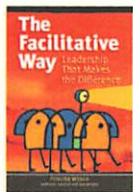
Other books by Priscilla Wilson



A Pioneer Love Story, the Letters of Minnie Hobart is an expression of praise for the many pioneer families who created community in a harsh land. It provides an intimate look at the history of the Texas Panhandle personalized through the eyes of a woman of spirit and staying power.



Everyday Wonder, from Kansas to Kenya from Ecuador to Ethiopia (co-author, Kaze Gadway) is filled with short stories that reflect on every day moments in the midst of ordinary life that reveal the sacred. The holy engulfs us all the time though we tend not to recognize it.



The Facilitative Way, Leadership That Makes The Difference defines the ingredients of organizational change – effective team methods that facilitate learning and take people on a journey, from talk to action.

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